

BLUE BOOK

An Illustrated Magazine... August, 15c



Fulton Grant, H. Bedford-Jones,
William Chester, Robert Mill, Bigelow Neal,
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BLUE BOOK



AUGUST, 1936

MAGAZINE

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An Aviator's

By LELAND

AS it does for all flight students, the day came when I was ready to go up with my stage commander, the check pilot, and go "through the book," doing for him everything I had been taught thus far. This included spins, and I was not entirely confident of my ability to do them properly.

So it was with some trepidation that I listened to Lieutenant Fey say, "Take off, do a climbing turn to a thousand feet and then do two turns of a spin, coming out on a point." I was, in fact, startled by that order. A spin—two turns of a spin—from one thousand feet! I didn't think I could do one turn before the Jenny plunged into the trees.

At a thousand feet I leveled off and flew south, until, after four or five minutes, we were over a vast area of dun-colored mesquite. There, very cautiously, I pulled back on the "gun," let the Jenny kill its speed with the nose on the horizon, and when the whistle of wires had dwindled to a sigh, hauled the stick into my stomach and kicked right rudder hard.

The nose swung, accelerating, and the right wing went down with a lurch that took my breath. The earth seemed, then, to revolve very rapidly while the plane, pointed vertical at the ground, hung suspended in that awful pose. Suspended, yet approaching the mesquite with unbelievable velocity. Before we'd done one full turn, I lost my nerve, kicked the Jenny straight and hauled up on the nose.

Fey turned to me and laughed, pointing to the altimeter. We still had almost seven hundred feet. He yelled, "You've got to learn how near you can be to the ground without hitting it. Until you've hit it, you're still in the air." He blurred the engine once, to keep it warm, and added: "Most accidents happen at, or near, the ground. Don't get panicky until you've hit! Watch this."

And then, at less than six hundred feet, he whirled the plane into a spin. The earth seemed to slap me in the face. I was horror-struck as Fey completed one turn—and began another! We were diving straight at the mesquite a hundred and fifty feet away. Then, with smooth coordination of controls, Fey kicked out of it and pulled up on the nose—and we leveled off with twenty feet to spare.

My heart was pounding in my throat and ears until I could scarcely hear his hoarse instructions as we "floated" there: "Climb to three hundred, and do one full turn and come out. Don't get jerky."

Nodding dumbly, I gunned the engine and pulled up. A full turn from three hundred feet? What if I messed this up, and got tense

Scrapbook

JAMIESON

on the controls and interfered at the last instant with Fey's effort to recover us?

We got around, somehow. I admit in perfect frankness that I was scared so badly that I was awfully jerky, sloppy, on the controls in every phase of coming out. But I did come out, and believed in vast relief that I had passed the check.

"You've got to learn to do that smoothly," Fey yelled back at me. "You're still shy of the ground, and we're going to stay here till you get over it. Remember, the ground won't hurt you till it hits you, son."

So, for forty-five perspiring minutes we stayed out there, spinning down one turn and coming out with our landing gear almost dragging in the leaves of trees, then climbing up and doing it again. I smoothed out, and slowly got so that my reflexes and reactions functioned just as well at ten feet as at a thousand. In just less than an hour, I was cured of a fear that I hadn't realized I had had. Yet I resolved one thing, flying back to land: I'd never get myself into a position that I had only ten feet to spare between myself and piling up against the ground.

But within a year, I did. I was instructing advanced students, then, at Kelly Field, and I was trying to teach this boy to slip a DH and lose altitude without gaining forward speed. We practiced, coming down from half a mile, and I was so intent upon his work that I let him start a last attempt with too little altitude. He banked steeply, holding the nose up, and kicked top rudder.

This time, he had barely gliding speed, and when the rudder took effect, the plane snapped over in a quick "*renversement*," and started spinning. We had five hundred feet, but this wasn't any Jenny; this was a heavy ship.

My movement to take over the controls was like the flurry of a cat to get its feet beneath it when it falls. The engine took the instant that I gunned it, and I looked over the long nose, watching the ground and thinking we were going to hit in a wheat-field half a mile behind the Kelly hangar line. I kicked rudder hard, pushed the stick forward, then eased it back, almost in one reaction. The spin stopped.

But the ship was still stalled, diving vertical, and I didn't think we could accelerate enough to get the nose up before we crashed. As rapidly as possible I eased back on the stick, feeling the yawing of the nose as the plane tried to fall off again into a spin.

We passed the level of the water-tank—which was a hundred feet. The nose was up to forty-five degrees above the vertical, but we

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hadn't flying speed, and I couldn't level out. For every degree I lifted the nose, we lost ten feet. Queerly, at that moment I thought of Lieutenant Fey and his teachings. If I obeyed my natural impulse and hauled the stick forcibly into my stomach all the way, the DH would fall off and there wouldn't be a chance of getting out of it alive. But if I could make myself go on and fly right to the ground, I might crack up without a fatal injury.

That next second was forever. I could see the heads of the ripe wheat, it was so close below. But as rapidly as possible, I eased back on the stick, and the nose crept up, the plane still stalled. I thought for an instant I had lost, when the spreader bar sank low enough to slice sickeningly through wheat. But the descent was stopped, and we wallowed along on the verge of falling off on either wing, until the engine could accelerate the ship enough to climb.

I flew back to the field, whispering praise of an instructor who had known enough to try to teach his students this important thing: that most accidents can be prevented, if the pilot has been disciplined, until the ship has gone into the ground.

A moving story of the making of an American, by the able author of "No Flame More Fierce."

By FULTON GRANT

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

HIS name was Hippolyte Ybarregaray, but he got to be an American in spite of that. I first met him in 1920 when we were both youngsters in school. I remember how everyone in the class laughed at his name the day his father brought him down to school. Laughed at the boy, too, mean little brats that we were. There is nothing so cruel as youth, or the laughter of young boys. And that laugh followed him for ten years. It haunted him. It got into his blood and into the fibers of him. But it made a man out of him, and an American.

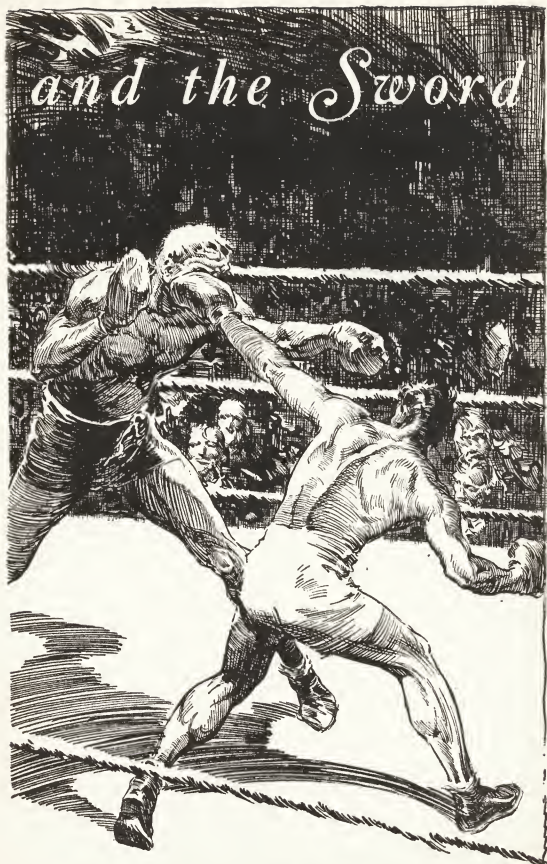
They came into the school that day, hand in hand, just as we were all forming a line in the hallway, ready to march into the assembly-room for flag-salute and the opening service. In spite of his short gray beard that was turning white, the father was not an old man then. We stared at them because we had never seen anything like them in our lives. But it was not then that we laughed. You couldn't laugh at the father; he had a presence, an air—something that transcended laughter.

His nose was a perfect hook, sharp and thin, like the beak of a hawk. His skin was so dark that the contrast of it against the gray-white of his beard and mustaches made him look a little unreal. And his eyes were swords. They seemed to leap out from under his bushy eyebrows. Not exactly satanic, but a little uncanny he was.

And the boy, too, was dark and skinny and a little peaked. Funny little devil he was that day, with his skimpy short pants that were too tight on his thighs, and his heavy black socks that only covered half of his ratty little legs, and that blue uniform jacket with brass buttons on it. It was a French *lycée* costume, but of course we couldn't have known that. And we would have laughed anyway, for that matter.

Foreigners! Why is that word a kind of opprobrium in the language of young American boys? We knew they were foreigners, because when the father led





His astonishing exhibition was not boxing—in a sense; it was fencing with fists.



Wood engraving
by Louis F. Grant

"Ze right, she are weeth my blade."

the boy up to Miss Bush, who was in charge of our line, and tried to ask her for the principal's office, he had a hard time of it in his queer broken English. But he had a manner. I remember how impressed I was at the way he bowed to Miss Bush, stiff and military, but with such a majestic grace that the dumpy little woman was embarrassed and confused. She pointed out the right door and they walked away, little Hippolyte clinging tightly to his father's big hand.

WHEN we went back to classes after assembly, this queer-looking little fellow was sitting on half of a seat in the 4-B classroom, nervous perhaps, but quite composed, and holding a class-card for Miss Bush. A little thin, a little drawn he was, but not at all bad-looking. I guessed he was about my own age, but he had a look on his face that you only see in grown-ups—understanding, perhaps, and control and self-possession. When Miss Bush came in, the boy stood up quickly, and made a fairly good imitation of his father's bow.

She took his class-card and read it, then, frowning a little, she said to him, in that silvery way teachers have when they are trying to be diplomatic:

"Well, young man, we're very glad to have you with us, but won't you pronounce your name for us? Then there won't ever be any misunderstanding."

It was then that he said it:

"*Ee-po-leet Ee-barn-ay-gar-eye-ee*," just like that; and we all shouted with laugh-

ter. The loudest laugh of all came from Aaron Wolf. He opened his loose mouth and blared, as if that name were the funniest thing he had ever heard in his life. Then he yelled out:

"Yea bo, kids! He's a wop, all right, with a name like that, and look at those pants! Haw, haw, haw!"

Miss Bush called Aaron down sharply for that, but you couldn't do much with that boy. Nobody could. His father was the richest man in Doremusville. He was a judge and a director on the school board, so Aaron did just about as he pleased. He was a kind of school hero too, although he was both a snob and a bully. He did things that none of the rest of us would dare to do, and we were young enough to think that was brave and clever. So we hero-worshiped him in that queer twisted way school-children have. Secretly, I think, we all disliked Aaron Wolf, but we believed he could lick any boy in town of his size and age. Probably this was not true, except that we made it true by imagining it. And even the teachers were a little afraid of Wolf.

But that laugh of Wolf's had a strange effect on the new boy. He drew himself up with a dignity that was years older than his age, and *looked* at Aaron—stared at him out of those sharp black eyes of his, not the way a boy might stare, but like an indignant older person. That look had power. It quieted the class, and it even puzzled Aaron Wolf into quietness, far more than Miss Bush's reprimand.

Then the boy took his seat in the back of the room, and class began. He was not called on to recite that day, and so we forgot all about him until recess.

At eleven o'clock we all went out onto the playground for a ten-minute recess, and it was then that Aaron Wolf started the whole curious business. Wolf came out with the two boys who were most friendly with him, Johnny Parks and "Skip" Weldon. They saw the new boy walking alone and came up behind him. Wolf pointed, and yelled out to the rest of the class in a loud voice:

"Hey, kids, look at those pants! Look at that unie! Whoever heard of a pair of pants like that? Hi, wop, where d'you ever get those rags? Looks like a poorhouse uniform. Didja come out of a poorhouse, wop?"

Little Ybarnegaray stopped where he was, stiff and rigid. Maybe his father couldn't speak English very well, but

the boy could and did. He said, very clearly and distinctly:

"Is it that you are trying to insult me?"

You can imagine how that sounded to us. Boys our age didn't talk like that. It sounded stilted and sissy, as if he were trying to put on airs and act grown up. But he did say it, and he stood perfectly still with his little black eyes fixed indignantly on Aaron Wolf's face.

Aaron walked up to him, swaggering a little to show off in front of the rest of us, and he slowly pushed his hand flat in the boy's face—you know the insulting gesture.

Then that skinny little fellow appeared to lean away backward. His leg doubled up and then shot out again with all the force and weight of his body behind it, and his foot caught young Wolf a kick in the stomach that knocked him about ten feet in the dirt of the playground. Little Hippolyte stood watching him, on the ground, gasping and crying and trying to get his breath, all at the same time. Then he turned away without a word and went slowly back to the school building.

We thought it was a pretty dirty trick, kicking anybody in the stomach, but in

a way we were glad of it, because Wolf was always bullying the smaller boys, and he had asked for it. Actually, Wolf was not hurt very much, but his vanity was, and that made him furious. When he was able to breathe, he started to tell us what he was going to do to that "dirty little runt of a wop." The bell rang then, and we had to go back to classes, but we knew there was going to be a fight.

SCHOOL was out at three o'clock, and Aaron Wolf waited by the big maple tree in Monroe Street, by the cemetery, where there are no houses for half a block. The Ybarnegaray boy came walking along, looking down at his feet and not even noticing the crowd of us who gathered to see the fun. When he got to the tree, Aaron Wolf jumped him. The boy never had a chance; Wolf was bigger and heavier and knew how to fight. He slugged little Hippolyte on the side of the head before the boy even knew he

"You, Monsieur, are one pig," said Hippolyte. "One does not wish to soil the hands upon you, but it is the only thing you comprehend."





was there. And then he came tearing after him with both hands, hammering the lad all over the sidewalk. The new boy had no idea of how to defend himself. Anybody could see that he had never fought with his hands before. And he was bleeding terribly about the face before he had sense enough to wrap his arms around his head while Wolf was pounding him. Finally Wolf hit him a clean blow under his arms, and the youngster fell down onto the sidewalk, unconscious and bleeding. Wolf stepped on his hands and then kicked him as he lay there, screaming at him:

"You'd kick me in the stomach, would you, you dirty, greasy, slimy little wop? I'll show you!"

But Ybarnegaray never felt it. He lay there limp and bloody, without a sound. Wolf was frightened then, I think, because he picked up his hat and hurried away with Johnny Parks. I was scared too. I thought the boy was dead. I waited until Wolf had disappeared down the street, and then with some other boys, I tried to pick the little foreigner up, but we couldn't lift him. Then I ran

back to school, and I saw Mr. Caswell, who teaches the senior high-school classes. I called out to him that a boy had been hurt, and he came running. He picked little Hippolyte up in his arms and saw that bloody face of his.

"Who did this?" he shouted at me. "Tell me, now, who was it, Morton? Don't shield him."

HE was angry,—perhaps frightened too,—but I wouldn't tell. He asked who the boy was, and where he lived, but I could only tell him that it was a new pupil. Mr. Caswell worked on the lad for minutes and finally brought him to. He opened his eyes a little and looked as though he wanted to cry, but when he saw Mr. Caswell's face, he tried to sit up, couldn't because he was too sore, and then lay back again in the teacher's arms. Mr. Caswell asked him where he lived, and he told him a house in Van Duyn Place. I was going to run home when I saw Mr. Caswell start to carry the boy away, but he called me back.

"Morton, you come along; I may need you. I'm going to put a stop to this sort of thing."

So I came with him.

Van Duyn Place is only three blocks away from the school, and the new boy pointed out his house as we came into it. I can still see the expression on his father's face when he came hurriedly into the big room the servant showed us into—the agony and fear that came into it. He snatched the boy out of Mr. Caswell's arms and laid him on a *chaise-longue*, breathlessly saying something in a language which I made out to be French, although I didn't know enough to understand it. Hippolyte opened his eyes and tried to hold out his hand to his father, and said something in a slow, tired little voice.

After he spoke, the father suddenly stood up straight, towering over us, and glaring at Caswell. There was fire in his eyes. I have never in my life seen so complete an expression of indignation and of proud, haughty anger. French vowels flowed and poured forth out of that fine beard, and rolled down the broad chest of the man, making cadences of indignant music in my ears. I couldn't understand the words, but I knew the fury of the man. Mr. Caswell knew French, and he explained to me later that the man was furious, not because his boy had been fighting, but because

he had been submitted to the indignity of *being struck in the face by the hands of another boy!*

He assured Mr. Caswell that his son was "competent to defend his person and his honor," but that it was "incomprehensible that another boy should have *debased him by the touch of a fist.*" Such practices, he said, might be expected among the *canaille*, but that his own son should have received blows of the hand, in public, from the son of a prominent citizen of the town—name of a name, it was unthinkable!

Awkwardly, and in quite different-sounding French, Mr. Caswell tried to explain, and wanted to force me to tell the name of the boy who had hit little Ybarnegaray, but the father waved him away with a flourish of his hands: "No, I do not wish to know the name," he said. "But no; it would be indiscreet. I should cane him."

And then he made that stiff, military bow to Mr. Caswell and to me, and with a movement that was nothing short of majestic, he showed us to the door, constantly repeating, "*Merci, messieurs. Mais je vous remercie,*" which even I understood to be his thanks.

Just before we left, little Hippolyte got up from the *chaise-longue* and came over to me, holding out his hand. He smiled, and I could see it hurt him. He said, in his stilted English:

"I wish also to thank you. You have been so very kind. Always, I shall be your friend—monsieur."

Imagine it—he called me, "Monsieur!" We were each eleven years old!

WHEN we left, Mr. Caswell walked along with me, explaining what Mr. Ybarnegaray had said, and I could see he was impressed in some strange way. And just as I left him to run into my house, he stopped me and said, very seriously:

"Morton, you may like to remember this sometime. You can tell your grandchildren that you once met a man of an almost extinct race. A great race, but outmoded—practically extinct."

"What race, Mr. Caswell?" I asked. "I thought they were French."

"The race of gentlemen, my boy. Remember this day."

And then he went his way, leaving me to puzzle over what he meant. . . .

Young Ybarnegaray returned to school the next day. His face was patched with court-plaster, and his eye was band-



aged, but his extraordinary dignity was still just as evident. At recess he came over to me and thanked me again for helping him. He was friendly and nice, and I liked him, even though I thought him odd and "foreign." We talked a little about school, and then he asked me a curious question.

"Please to tell me—" he said in his stilted way. "In France, where I have always gone to school, I have never seen done this thing which this Wolf boy has done to me. My father, he is in agreement with me that I must challenge this boy to fight. But I do not know that it is right. The *épée*—the sword, it is not the custom in your America, *hein?*"

I laughed, of course, at the idea of a duel, but he was perfectly serious. So I said:

"We don't fight with swords over here. We fight with the fists. Every American boy knows how to fight a little. Don't they have boxing in France?"

"*La boxe?* Ah, yes, it exists. But—it is for the lower classes, and for the professionals. We have also *la savate*, which is to box with the feet. But this too, I think you do not do, *non?* Because this Wolf, he could not defend

himself as I kicked. It is very strange. I cannot do this thing, *la boxe*. But I must to give a lesson to this boy. But—it is so very confusing. He does not know the *escrime*—the fencing.”

And he shook his head, puzzled, and walked away into the school

AT three o'clock I started walking home, down past the cemetery. Waiting, under the same maple tree where he had been so badly hurt, I saw little Ybarnegaray. Aaron Wolf and his friends came along from school, expecting nothing. I saw little Hippolyte step out from the maple tree and walk straight up to Aaron.

Lifting his chin high and drawing himself up, nobly and haughtily, like the famous statue of General Gambetta in Paris, he said to the bigger boy:

“You, monsieur, are one pig; one does not wish to soil the hands upon you, but it appears that it is the only thing you comprehend.”

And then he slapped Aaron across the face.

Aaron Wolf swore and dropped his books and jumped at the French boy. This time it was a little different. Hippolyte Ybarnegaray doubled his little fists and hit Wolf as he came, punched him with two little pistons of fists, many times and very fast, but not very hard. Wolf was amazed, but only for a moment. The French lad never had a chance. He tried so hard, but it was hopeless. Wolf's great strength broke through his little arms which knew nothing of guarding, and smashed him down. He fell to the sidewalk and lay stunned for a moment, while Wolf started to walk away, leering and saying something about teaching “that nasty little foreign wop.” But Hippolyte got up groggily to his feet and ran after him. The fight lasted only a few seconds, however, because Mr. Caswell had seen it from the school grounds, and he pulled the boys apart, shaking Wolf angrily and warning him that he would be dismissed from school if this happened again.

I walked home with Hippolyte Ybarnegaray. He was hurt and bleeding and said very little. He did say that he wanted me to come to see him in his house—some other time, not then, because he would have to explain this fight to his father. So I went on home, but I liked that boy. And I was sorry for him, because he simply had no instinct for fighting with his fists.

Next day almost the same thing happened. Ybarnegaray came to school, patched up even more than ever, and when school let out, he waited for Aaron Wolf again by the maple tree. This time he didn't stop to insult Aaron, but he just ran at him, swinging his hands. Wolf saw him coming in time and dropped his books. He met Hippolyte with a hard right swing to the jaw as he charged, and dropped him. The French boy got up again and came charging in again. Wolf was puzzled. He didn't want to fight. He wasn't afraid; he wasn't hurt—but bully though he was, he didn't want to go on fighting that helpless youngster. He tried to back away, but Hippolyte kept coming at him, until finally it ended the way it had before, with the French boy on the sidewalk, badly beaten and Wolf walking away with his friend.

Walking home with Hippolyte, I tried to tell him how foolish he was.

“Look!” I said. “Maybe you know all about swords, see? If you was to fight me with swords, you'd kill me or wound me every time we fought. Swords are French, I guess; but fist-fighting is American. You aren't an American—not yet, anyhow.”

The boy gave me a queer look.

“But *non*, that is true. Not yet am I one American. Not yet.”

MY first visit to the house of Hippolyte Ybarnegaray was a strange incident in my life. I was invited for dinner. My parents had not wanted me to go, because to them too this boy and his father were “foreigners;” but Mother had once toured in France, and persuaded my father that the French were at least “civilized.” So I was allowed to go.

Actually, I came much too early, not knowing just what hour the boy had meant by “dinner,” and that brought about my experience.

A manservant showed me in, and presently Mr. Ybarnegaray came and welcomed me, stiffly but very cordially. He explained to me in his broken English that Hippolyte was doing something which could not be interrupted just then, and motioned for me to follow him into another room. He led me to the rear of the big old-fashioned house, and into a perfectly bare room—bare of every kind of furniture save for two chairs. The floor was carpeted with tightly stretched canvas, and in the middle of the floor stood Hippolyte, holding his right arm

out stiff and straight, his right foot advanced in front of him, and his left arm loosely held behind him. He was wearing a canvas suit that buttoned down the right side of his chest, a thing I had never seen before and didn't understand. He called out to me as we came in, but didn't move.

"Good evening," he said. "I must complete my practice until seven-thirty. Then I am of you. We did not expect you so soon."

The father was beaming at him and smiling proudly. Hippolyte still wore the scratches and bruises of his fight, but he seemed bright and happy.

I ASKED him what he was practicing, and he said:

"*Escrime*—the fencing, you call it."

"But—" I was puzzled. "You have no sword?"

"Not until seven-fifteen. You do not make the fencing?"

I said no, and he said something rapidly in French to his father, who waved me to a chair, and bowed to excuse himself. Hippolyte said nothing more, but remained there, stiff and rigid, until my own arm felt sore from watching him.

Presently the father returned, also dressed in a canvas suit and carrying two glittering swords and two masks. He went over to the boy, studied his arm and his legs, then clapped his hands. The boy dropped his arm and straightened up. He took one of the swords, put one of the masks over his face, and waited while his father did the same. Then he cried:

"*En garde!*"

The spectacle I witnessed then was one of the most perfect things in my memory, possibly the most utterly complete moment of beauty in my life. Years later I was to witness another moment not unlike this, but still different; and although it was of greater importance to Hippolyte Ybarnegaray, I do not think of it with the same feeling of sheer beauty as that ten-minute show between father and son gave me.

They fenced. The awkward little boy, gangling and lean, became suddenly the embodiment of grace and rhythm. His foil had become a living part of him. It flowed from him, became a part of his bloodstream, of his nervous fibers. Behind it his body flowed, rippling and moving like an elastic thing, a thing of thinking rubber. A dark flush gathered in his face. His eyes danced with the



"I do not wish to know the name. I should cane him!"

thrill of each rhythmic movement. He was a tiger. Leaping to the attack, darting in and out, thrusting, parrying, dancing, avoiding the button on his father's foil by the merest turn of his wrist or the slightest twist of his body, lunging, feinting, recovering, lunging again. I knew nothing of fencing, save what I had read about *D'Artagnan* and the *Three Musketeers* and other heroic fiction, but that was beautiful to me.

And the older man's body scarcely moved. Almost carelessly, almost without effort, his wrist would move—so slightly—and turn aside the darting blade of the boy's foil. Then, suddenly, he leaped back and lowered his sword, saying something in French. The boy too dropped his point to the floor, and stood waiting, breathing a little heavily. He turned to me with an eager boyish smile.

"Now you will see," he said.

Once more they addressed each other with a kind of salute, and then their blades tinkled. But it was different. The boy's face had grown serious, more concentrated. His father's blade urged forward—high, low, left, right, in, out—a tiny serpent of steel. A magnificent glow came to him. In the sharp light of the room his profile was silhouetted,

giving him the look of something resurrected, something glorious in a glorious past, something noble, majestic, grand beyond my experience. He advanced, retreated, advanced again. Then—and I can still remember those movements—he seemed to falter, almost but not quite lowered his point, made a sudden parry with his arm high and his point down at a sharp angle as the boy lunged furiously, moved suddenly to the left, and then straightened his blade.

"*Tac!*" he shouted, his eyes gleaming, his mustaches curling with a strange, almost Mephistophelean grin: "*Tac! Tac! Tac!*"

Three times, like liquid lightning, his blade had penetrated the boy's guard and touched the plastron that covered his chest, bending almost double, then springing out for the next thrust.

Then it was over. The father dropped his foil and lifted the boy in his arms. There were tears in little Hippolyte's eyes. They were sputtering in their staccato French, and the man was shaking his finger at the boy. Finally he kissed him, twice on each cheek, and set him down on his feet in front of me. He was so proud, that man, so very proud and happy. He said to me, in his difficult English:

"You do not on'erstan', monsieur, but eet ees zat ze p'tite Hippolyte weel, one day, be ze great *escrimeur*—greataire zan 'es fathaire, yes. Eet ees true."

Friendship was born and grew. The fine figure of Mr. Ybarnegaray appeared, one day, in our drawing-room at home, and even my father was brought under the man's spell. Hippolyte begged me to let his father teach me to fence too, so that we might practice together, but I was too awkward, too stiff, too immobile—too something. It embarrassed me so that I finally gave up trying.

HIPPOLYTE'S father explained it in his own way:

"Eet ees zat you have not ze *balance*," he said. "*La balance*, she ees everyt'ing. Like to ze cat, you must always e-move from one position of ze poise perfect into one othaire, no mattaire what ees ze complicated e-movement of ze adversaire. Ze eye, you can train her. Ze wrist, you can make her strong. But ze *balance*—ah, she ees born. Weet'out ze *balance*, zere ees no *escrime*."

I learned that Hippolyte's strange practice of standing for half an hour with his arm outstretched was to give

him a strong arm and wrist; but the most remarkable part of his training was to stand empty-handed before his father, who would feint and tap him, briskly and suddenly, on the shoulder, on the arm, on the chest, in order to make him understand the positions in which the body was naturally balanced, or naturally thrown off-balance. It was all too complicated for me, I fear, but it was quite wonderful and scientific as that grand old swordsman explained it.

FRIENDS we were, Hippolyte and I, and I got to learn something of his history, and of his father's too. They were French Basques—Ybarnegaray is a Basque name. They came originally from a little town near the Spanish border of France, near Saint-Jean-de-Luz. Polyeucte Ybarnegaray, the father, had come suddenly, unexpectedly and without any preparation. He had fought a political duel and had killed his man. Political duels are not uncommon in France, it appears; but Ybarnegaray was reputed to be the best swordsman in France if not in the entire world, and his reputation caught up public resentment. A murder-charge was brought against him. His friends advised him to leave the country. This he did, finally, and so the charge was dropped, although he knew that he could never return to France. But Ybarnegaray did not feel any disgrace. He had committed no crime. He had, as he expressed it, wiped out an insult to his honor.

"What would you, monsieur?" he said to my father when they were talking about it. "Eet ees ze code. Zis man, he were also one skeelful weeth ze sword. Myself, I might have die. But ze right, she are weeth my blade, *n'est-ce pas?*"

There was only a little more trouble at school between Hippolyte and Aaron Wolf. The reason was, perhaps, that little Ybarnegaray attacked Wolf every day. And every day he was beaten, bruised, hurt and bloodied. Wolf was too much for him.

But this only lasted a week or so, for shortly Aaron Wolf left the school and went away to some boarding-school. Ybarnegaray was never known to fight another boy. He was gentle, quiet, and studious. It was quite apparent that his French *lycée* was far in advance of parallel grades of American schools, for Hippolyte was well along in Latin and even Greek and trigonometry, when the rest of us, his age, were scarcely beginning.

Our friendship was broken after six years when Hippolyte's father sent him away to an American military school, feeling, after talking it over with my parents, with whom he had become quite friendly, that the boy was too young to enter a university. He was, after all, only seventeen; and his father felt, too, that the physical training of a military school would be good for him.

I lost touch with the boy for two years, except for an occasional letter, for he stayed away for summer camp with his schoolmates, but I did learn that he had taken honors in fencing, which of course I knew he would do. Even his letters stopped after the first year, and his father moved to some other town or into New York City, so that I almost forgot my little French friend. Boys are like that. Early friendships often blow away like the early frost.

Then I went to college.

Jefferson College is a small, upstate institution, that hardly boasts more than five hundred students. But it was my father's *alma mater*, and I never thought of going elsewhere. Jefferson was one of those little schools that made sudden football history, however, along in 1930, and it bore a great name. I was pretty proud to go there. Of course I was immediately "rushed" by my father's fraternity, Psi Psi Psi, and I was pledged during my first rather hectic two days "on the hill," as they call the campus.

And on the third day my surprise was no greater than my pleasure in discovering that Hippolyte Ybarnegaray was not only an upper-classman at Jefferson but was living at the Psi house.

"Charley Morton!" he called out to me when we saw each other. "I've never been so glad to see anybody in my life! Lord, man, how you've grown up! You'll room with me, won't you? As an upper-classman I can have any freshman I want to room with."

Of course I would and did.

AND Hippolyte also had grown up. The gangling boy was gone altogether, and a fine-looking man, broad-shouldered, smoothly muscled and wiry as a steel cable had grown out of him, very handsome too, and astoundingly like his father, despite his easier American ways and gestures.

In about three days, however, we both made another discovery, and one which was not exactly to my liking: Aaron Wolf had come to Jefferson.

Wolf, now a junior, had transferred to Jefferson from a larger university because of illness in his family, and in order to be nearer home in case he were needed. He had brought with him, it seemed, a rather wonderful reputation. He had been a football hero at Har-mouth and had even been mentioned on one of the All-American teams in his sophomore year. You probably remember him in one of the line-ups. This made him the talk of the campus at Jefferson, especially because we needed more strength in our backfield.

I MET Wolf on the campus one day. He was really huge. His rough and aggressive manner had vanished with the years, but it was not hard to see that he thought very well of himself. He was pleasant enough to me, and said:

"Morton's the name, isn't it? Well, well—good to see a boy from the old home town, what?"

But I felt the snobbishness and the conceit in him, just the same.

Aaron Wolf did all that was expected of him in football. Jefferson, playing a hard schedule against far bigger schools, was only scored on three times and tied once. That tie lost us a chance for the Rose Bowl, but it was Wolf who saved us from defeat by Purdue with that last-minute touchdown after a glorious forty-yard run: He was a hero, looked it, acted it, and loved it.

But, football season over, intra-mural and minor sports came into season. Needless to say, Hippolyte Ybarnegaray was champion of all classes in foils, *épée* and *sabre*. In a smaller way he was as much of a hero as Aaron Wolf, and everyone expected him to captain the next Olympic team, if he would only become an American citizen. For citizenship is an absolute requirement.

But he would not—not then, at least. I reasoned with him and argued with him, but he only smiled.

"Not yet, old son. We shall see."

There was a mystery in that, but there was another mystery: Every evening, right after dinner, Hippolyte used to disappear. It wasn't a girl; it wasn't his studies. I knew all about him, naturally, for I roomed with him. But this hour's disappearance every day baffled me; and whenever I asked him where he went, he only smiled and said:

"My boy, I'm getting Americanized."

More honors came for Aaron Wolf that season when he won the heavyweight

boxing championship. He was tremendously powerful, and no one in school had any chance against him. This too added to his considerable conceit, and although he was admired and respected for his athletic ability on the campus, his swell-headedness was noticed and talked about.

Then came the fencing. Hippolyte, as champion, did not have to compete in the preliminary matches, and the day of the finals was looked upon as something rather special, for "Barney," as they called Ybarnegaray, had made a reputation as being so spectacular that visitors came from all the near-by cities to see him keep his championship.

He kept it, too, but that has little to do with this story. I remember how easily he handled the eager, sweating lad who had fought his way to the finals. It was beautiful in a sense; yet it was a master toying with a pupil. The challenger—his name was Larry Roper—was not a bad swordsman, but his most frantic efforts were only trivial against the blade of Ybarnegaray. Twelve touches, the match. Hippolyte—"Barney," to the shouting crowd—made his first five in succession, and needed only a minute for each touch. He courteously "gave" a touch to Roper, but it was evident to everyone that the champion never even exerted himself to parry one of the challenger's simple classical thrusts. He took another, making six, and gave another, gracefully and with sportsmanship.

THEN suddenly there was a roar from some spot in the audience near the platform:

"Lousy! Terrible! Don't be a cheap sport! What are you trying to do, show off? Take that wop out of there!"

I knew that voice. It was Aaron Wolf. He must have been drunk, I felt. The thing was so uncalled-for, so stupid, so rude. Hippolyte turned his head for an instant, astounded at such a breach of etiquette. Larry Roper leaped at him in a split second as he recoiled at the blatant interruption, and made two quick touches. Part of the crowd cheered the obviously courageous man who was bound to lose anyway. But the other part hissed.

Aaron Wolf's voice rang out then, loud and insulting.

"That's the way, Roper! Stab him. Make him crawl, the lousy foreigner! He thinks he's too good to be an American. He's afraid of the Olympics! Go get him, Roper. Haw, haw, haw!"

Both fencers had stepped apart after those two touches, waiting the signals from the judges to assault again. I watched Hippolyte Ybarnegaray's face, and I could see a queer, twisted smile come over it. But while they waited, Synek, the Hungarian coach who instructed the fencers at Jefferson and who was acting as judge, stepped to the center of the platform.

Holding up his hand for quiet, he said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I regret that some one has forgotten himself. I hope the matches will be allowed to continue without further show of boorishness and bad sportsmanship."

Then he sat down amid cheers.

The blades flashed again. This time there was no chance for poor Roper. Ybarnegaray's blade whipped around his foil like a snake, and in almost less than one second he was disarmed. Barney made two gentle touches, winning the match, and then he turned and bowed to the applause.

SUDDENLY he raised his hand. There was silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the Basque swordsman, quietly yet distinctly, in that mellifluous flowing voice of his, "with your kind indulgence I am going to commit an ethical blunder. I have been fortunate enough to win the foils championship for the third time at Jefferson, but I am not quite satisfied. We have with us, here in the audience, another champion. You all know him. It is Mr. Aaron Wolf, a remarkable football-player, and boxing champion of the college. Although I have not competed in boxing, and have no reputation by which to add to the glory of the champion, I wish to challenge Mr. Wolf to a bout of ten rounds. Mr. Wolf, do you hear me? I challenge you to such a bout—now, immediately, to take place before the present audience. Or possibly you do not care to fight a mere middleweight? Will you answer, please, Mr. Wolf?"

I cannot express the heaviness of the silence that followed this unexpected and even astounding challenge. It lay upon the great hall of the gymnasium like a cloud of chlorine gas. Then a tremendous roar burst out. I didn't know whether they were cheering or booing Ybarnegaray. It was pandemonium, confusion, a mad yelling.

Then, quite suddenly, it stopped. I could see Aaron Wolf's back. He was



The challenger was not a bad swordsman, but his most frantic efforts were only trivial against the blade of Ybarnegaray.

on his feet. Heads turned his way. He was speaking.

"I see no reason why I should fight you, Ybarnegaray," he said. "I've licked you ten times or more, and you're just a sneaking little wop of a middle-weight—"

"Of course, Mr. Wolf," came Hippolyte's voice, "if you are *afraid*—if you are out of training—if your courage is only that of one who cries out insults in a crowd of people—"

The words were like knives, like sword-points. Wolf leaped out into the aisle. He was waving his arms and shouting.

"All right. You asked for it. I'll fight you—now, here, any time, any place!" And he added insult upon insult to such an extent that the entire crowd hissed at him.

Both men disappeared—to the dressing-rooms, I supposed. The audience was babbling, talking excitedly, shouting, betting, protesting, admonishing, cat-calling, cheering. This went on for minutes—I have no idea of the time. I was too troubled, too worried for Hippolyte. I wanted to be in his corner. I wanted to go to him and tell him how stupid he

was. Wolf weighed at least two hundred pounds, while he scarcely touched one hundred and sixty-five. It would be a slaughter, just a stupid, brave, brazen, impossible gesture. He would merely make a fool of himself. He would only lose all the glory and the fine applause for his wonderful swordsmanship by trying to box, by stupidly and blindly letting himself be practically murdered by a man against whom he had no chance. It was quixotism, windmill tilting—a useless demonstration.

But I could do nothing. I was a freshman and I had no voice, no power, no influence, no authority. I sat cringing inwardly for my best friend, sat bewildered and wanting to cry like a kid.

Then they appeared.

In Wolf's corner was one of the varsity half-backs, a big man who had been runner-up for the heavyweight boxing championship. In Ybarnegaray's corner was a little, oldish, flat-nosed, angle-faced fellow with cauliflower ears and about the toughest eyes I have ever seen. The referee was Coach Synek, a good man who knew boxing as well as fencing.

I tried to cry out at Hippolyte, but my voice was too hoarse from fear.

Then the whistle. There was no gong. The whistle blew. The men refused to shake hands. They were cautioned as to rules. They were announced to the crowd. And the whistle blew again.

I've heard of "fights-of-the-century," and read about them, but you should have seen that battle. Heavy, powerful, muscled like a Hercules, his face hard and set to kill, Aaron Wolf crept out of his corner, flat-footed and weaving. The Frenchman came out on the balls of his feet, springing lightly and easily, *flowing*, if you know what I mean, as he did in his fencing. Wolf intended to waste no time. He flashed a cruel grin at the crowd and leaped at his man. But his man was not there.

Like lightning, Ybarnegaray's body leaped aside, caught his balance, pivoted on his mercurial feet, and—*tat-tat-tat!* Three times he sent vicious hooks into the big man's side. Then he danced away, avoiding the heavier man's terrific swing by swaying his body. It was beautiful. There was nothing of the old awkward puzzled French boy whom Aaron Wolf had beaten on the sidewalk of Doremusville. This man was a whip-pet, a knifelike fighting-machine.

But Wolf was good. He saw that Barney had learned to box. I too knew then where Hippolyte had spent those mysterious evening hours—in "getting Americanized," as he had told me. Aaron played carefully, watching his openings, stalking his man. He was fast, too, for a man of his bulk; and it became evident that he planned now to wear Ybarnegaray down by refusing to let him fight at long-range. He came boring in. He forced the lighter man toward the ropes. He waited, lionlike, ready for the kill. Then in a beautiful sudden flash of movement, he charged. Everyone held his breath. Was this the end?

It was not.

I HARDLY know how to describe the action, but to me it seemed as though Hippolyte, ducking low under the charge and dancing away, tapped Aaron Wolf lightly on the shoulder—not a blow: a tap. Wolf's feet crossed, tangled, half-turned him, and then the Frenchman was in. *Tat-tat-tat-tat!* It was machine-gun-like. Each blow seemed to throw Wolf farther off his balance. A final blow caught him squarely on the side of the jaw, and he crashed to the canvas, while the whole gymnasium howled.

Then the whistle. The round was over. . . .

Round two was the same. Wolf never landed a clean blow. His face was being cut to ribbons by the rapierlike jabbing and chopping of the lighter man. He seemed tangled in his own feet. He fell three times; yet the blows he had received were scarcely enough to knock down a man his size.

AND as the round closed, I began to understand what was going on.

Balance, that was it!

That same science of "*la balance*" which the great swordsman Hippolyte's father had called "every'ting in *escrime*" was the secret of his astonishing exhibition. It was not even boxing—not in the sense that Wolf was boxing. It was fencing, with the fists. And balance! Each move the Frenchman made was calculated to throw Wolf off-balance, and did, too. But it went on.

Three rounds, four rounds, five rounds—seven rounds. Monotonous sword-thrusting with the fists, tearing, cutting, not injuring his man seriously nor threatening a knock-out, Hippolyte Ybarnegaray was turning the puffing Wolf into a raw, floundering pulp. Aaron had landed only two or three blows. He was dazed. He was cut over his eyes, cut about the nose, cut about the body. But he fought on, grim and still powerful.

Then, just before the whistle blew for the end of the seventh, Wolf found an opening. Another fighter—not a *fencing* fighter—would have covered it easily. But Ybarnegaray, trying too hard to unbalance his man, left his guard too high as he was dancing back from one of his lightning thrusts. The ropes were too near. He had misjudged their distance. They checked his retreat, and the bloody giant of a Wolf tore in. Three chugging, pile-driving blows he ripped into the slim body of the Frenchman. I could hear him grunt as he put his strength full into them. And Hippolyte sagged against the ropes, sagged and collapsed.

Then the whistle. Then the howl of the crowd. It was a madhouse, that whole crazy mob of an audience. Hippolyte was carried to his corner. The little flat-nosed man was dancing around him, working on him, splashing him, slapping him. He sat up. Shook his head—smiled. Removed his mouth-guard, spat. Smiled again. But he was white, and it was pretty plain that he was hurt.

Then the whistle for the eighth.

Wolf came warily now, wiped clean of his blood, his face set and drawn, his eyes low and bright, a slight grin on his face. Ybarnegaray was in and out, in and out—three times his lancelike thrusts brought the red back to Wolf's cut lips; but Wolf shook his head and crept slowly in, waiting. I had never seen a ten-round bout in my life. Most college boxing is limited to four or six rounds, or even three, for the lighter weights. I was amazed at the stamina of both of these men. I began to feel almost impersonal. The sheer beauty of rhythm and movement caught me and led my thoughts away from my personal interest. My eyes lost their focus. I saw only movement, only shapes, only form.

Then there was a wild shriek from one of the girls in the audience. My eyes came back to focus. Wolf was tearing in, his arms working like driving machines. Ybarnegaray was against the ropes, head down, arms covering, taking terrific punches about the body, rolling with them, sliding out from them.

Then he was free, dancing away. But it was not the same. His steps were less sure; his knees gave, wobbled; his spring was gone. Wolf followed, crowded him, moved like a panther after him. Charged, piled blow upon blow, sank his padded fists into the frailer body. The crowd was insane. Men stood on the seats, yelled themselves hoarse, beat the floor.

Hippolyte was down; Coach Synek was counting. He was up.

And then—it was fantastic, really: Hippolyte Ybarnegaray, the swordsman, the lance of fire, the rapier, charged and traded punches with this giant of a man who outweighed him by thirty pounds. Toe to toe they stood, and not a thought of defense, not a thought of feinting or ducking—or balance! There was just the thumping of gloves—shocking, brutal, terrific.

THEN, suddenly, it was over. . . . Hippolyte Ybarnegaray was down. Wolf was retreating to a neutral corner, dripping with blood too, but still able. Coach Synek was counting—six—seven—eight—nine. . . . The Frenchman was on his knees, crouching, rising, staggering up. Wolf was creeping forward. Ybarnegaray gave a mighty lurch and swayed to his feet. He tried to dance, failed, tried to rush, failed again, aimed a blow which would not have reached halfway, failed—and fell headlong.

He was out. The great heart in him could not drive his failing body any longer. Power had overcome science and sheer will. Coach Synek counted while bedlam reigned.

Then occurred a surprising thing!

WOLF, the tough, snobbish, swelled-headed, insulting, cruel, boastful and swaggering Aaron Wolf, stepped over to that beaten boy and lifted him in his arms.

Synek tried to lift up Wolf's hand as winner, but the football-player pushed him away. He lifted Hippolyte in his arms and dragged him toward the audience. He lifted Hippolyte's padded hand, his right hand—the signal of the winner—and waved it, limply dangling, to the audience.

Wolf raised his own hand to hush the crazy mob. The roar stopped.

"Folks," said Wolf, slowly and in a voice so low that I could scarcely hear it where I sat, "folks, I didn't win this fight. I want to tell you that, and I mean it. This man has more nerve than I ever *will* have. I've been a mucker and a bum, and I owe this little Frenchman an apology. I might as well make it good. And say, folks, I don't care very much what you think of me, see? I just want to tell you that this Ybarnegaray is the greatest guy in this college. I mean that. I'll fight hell out of anybody who thinks he's not. And he's the next Olympic fencing champion—maybe he's the next boxing champ, too. Look at him, folks, this is Ybarnegaray—the greatest athlete and the grandest guy in Jefferson!"

Well, I can't tell you what happened after that. That crowd went completely screwy. They broke the benches and they just tore everything loose. They cheered and cheered and cheered. And then Hippolyte was opening his eyes and trying to stand on his own feet. He looked up at Aaron Wolf, and there was a puzzled smile on his face. He waved his hand in a queer gesture at all of us, and we quieted down.

Ybarnegaray was talking. He was saying something to Wolf.

"And—you—won't—laugh at me—again—for a wop?" he asked him, slowly, as if the words hurt his mouth, and looking at him all the time with that funny sidelong look of his.

"Hell, no," said Aaron Wolf. "You aren't a wop, you big wop!"

And then he picked Hippolyte up in

his arms and carried him off the platform while the crowd went wild again. And that wasn't all.

Back again in the Psi Psi Psi house, in our room, Hippolyte told me how he had been training and boxing for years. When he learned that Wolf was in Jefferson, he hired one of the grand old-time middle-weight champions, Patsy "Baldy" Kelley, to make him into a real fighter. He did use the balance idea too, just as I had thought, but that was only part of it. The rest was *will*.

And that night, while he was changing his bandages before going to bed, he said to me:

"Charley, I guess I'll go in for the Olympics. I'm an American now, I guess."

"Sure you are," I told him. "The best American in school."

He was happy. So happy! And he explained to me how that laugh of Wolf's and of the whole class, back in 1920, had hurt him and worried him and haunted him.

"Charley," he said, "swords and fists and all that—the way people fight, the way people express themselves—those things are symbols. A symbol is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace. Well, it took me a long time to get that 'inward and spiritual American grace,' didn't it?"

THAT was a little over my head, so I said nothing. Pretty soon he came over to me and showed me some official-looking papers.

"See?" he said. "This is my application for citizenship . . . my final papers. I didn't want to do it until I was ready. But now I am—and I'm going to have a good American name, too. Whoever heard of an American called Hippolyte Ybarnegaray?"

"That's a good idea," I said. "What's your name?"

"Y. Barney Geary," he said, solemnly and no fooling.

"My God!" I said when I recovered from the shock. "And what's the 'Y.' stand for?"

"I dunno," said this brand-new American. "Yankee, maybe."

"Oh, yeah?" I said.

"Yeah," said Barney. "Yeah is good American too."

So I just gave up and quit.

"Springfield 00078596," another brilliant story by Fulton Grant, will appear in the next—the September—issue.

Ladder

A vivid and unusual story of China, by the author of "Caravan Treasure."

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

STIFF dry reeds rasped the sides of the palanquin, producing a continuous hissing sound, loud and disturbing, suggestive of innumerable angry serpents. It was at the end of July (*Ch'iyüeh*), the peak of the summer's heat. The coolies streamed sweat. The sour reek of it came to the nostrils of the man they carried. He cursed them.

The path zigzagged across a treeless plain. Far ahead was a cobalt smear that represented the foothills of Tai-Ping. At moments, when the coolies halted, the choking silence that lay upon the plain closed in on the swishing sounds caused by the reeds. When the bearers jogged forward, the hissing noise again pricked the quiet.

The never-ending attack of the reeds upset the nerves of the six coolies. One whispered of devils. His theory received immediate support. There were devils in the reeds. Surely—thousands of them! They were angry with the big white barbarian in the palanquin.

Suddenly the leader halted, and clucked excitedly. He had seen "something." He couldn't tell what it was. It had crossed the track about fifty yards in front. No, it wasn't a fox.

The big white man ordered them forward. They ignored his command. They were listening to the coolie who had seen the something. The fellow asserted that it had green eyes—green eyes, and an outstretched tongue.

The six squealed in chorus. They dropped the palanquin from their shoulders and fled along the narrow path, the devil-fear whipping their bare legs.

The angry occupant of the chair pulled out a revolver and fired at the running figures. They squealed louder



and dived into the reeds. For a little while there came the threshing sounds made by the deserters fighting their way through the dried stalks; then the quiet closed in, gobbling at the curses of the white man. Judges of colorful language said that Shan Paddon could outswear any man on the thousand-league stretch of coast between Vladivostok and Singapore, throwing in the hinterland as far as the Gobi Desert. With that special area the angels who record blasphemy have to work late and early.

Shan Paddon guessed the distance to the rising ground as a matter of nine *li*, a little more than four miles. From the palanquin he took a leather sack and a flask, tightened his belt and stepped forward. Beyond the Hills of Tai-Ping were the Stairs of Compassion. So said the One Who Had Died Hurriedly. So said the Book of Chung-Kuo. . . .

Dark, distorted memories thrust insistently before the eyes of Shan Paddon.

The specters annoyed him. He, Shan Paddon—"Big Paddon of Ching-chou-fu"—had killed often before the unfortunate affair of the One Who Had Died Hurriedly (this being the name bestowed on the corpse by the bribed ghouls who took it away); but her murder was a sort of chemical reagent that brought out memories of former killings and marshaled them against his peace of mind. They harried him, a grisly procession, with the girl always in the lead.

He took the Book of Chung-Kuo from the bag. It had been her book; it bore her ideograph in vermilion ink—she had then been called by her father the Restless Bird. The book was needful for the success of the adventure on which he had set out, but at moments he wished that he could put it from him.



Illustrated by John Richard Flanagan

As he fingered the thin volume of verse, her specter sprang up before him. In the strange citrine light she rose above the reeds. Tall, slight, she was—willowy in that unforgettable Chinese suppleness one sees in the pictures of Ku Kaichih. Dressed in peach-blossom silk pajamas, the right hand, so wonderfully joined to the rounded wrist, pointing to marks on the white throat—cruel finger-marks made by Paddon's great fingers.

PADDON stumbled. He looked away from her, but she danced after his evasive eyes. He was sweating like the coolies now, and he cursed his lack of control. If he was going to present the Book of Chung-Kuo, and tell the story he had concocted about her lingering death and his own unpaid-for services, he would have to free himself of the fear brought by her apparition.

"It's this damned dead country," he growled. "Everything in it is dead—dead for millions of years. It gives me the jim-jams. If I can get the money, I'll clear out."

The specter dimmed gradually. Relieved, Paddon considered the story he had to tell. His mind ran up and down the threads like a spider on a web—a web of wretched lies that he had woven for a man who lived on the mountain-top reached by the Stairs of Compassion. A man who was supposed to possess treasure—great treasure, according to the One Who Had Died Hurriedly.

"Lots of these yellow swine are well fixed," reflected Paddon. "They pretend to be poor when they've got thousands hidden away in some old pot." He recalled a high moment in his career, when he had smashed a pigeon-blood vase and produced a stream of silver taels. The aged owner of the vase was for the moment in a state of unconsciousness because of a blow from Paddon's fist. . . .

The foothills were quite close now. Packed against them, much like a wasp's nest against a wall, was a village. Paddon knew that the palanquin-bearers would be there before him. He knew the story they would tell. Devils were chasing the big white barbarian they were carrying, thousands of devils. The superstitious inhabitants would listen to the coolies and then bar the gates.

Paddon was near enough now to see proof of his surmise. The gates were already closing. A man on a donkey rode at full speed toward the ever-narrowing opening. The wooden saddle had slipped

under the belly of the beast, but fear that he would be locked outside stopped the rider from adjusting it. The donkey nosed through the gap; then the dull clash of the great wooden barriers came to Paddon's ears.

Paddon refused to accept the snub. He mounted the slope and rapped on the gates with the butt of his revolver, demanding admittance and shelter.

Whispers came from behind the nail-studded doors. A quavering voice expressed the decision of the head-men. The honorable stranger could sleep in the mud hut without the walls. For the moment, the presence of the honorable stranger within the village might be conducive to trouble.

The hut, Paddon knew well, was one reserved for lepers and those suffering from smallpox. He was annoyed. In loud colorful language he informed the invisible speaker that his, the speaker's, father and mother had never been united in wedlock, that his sisters were not what they should be, and his brothers were clubfooted brigands with the hearts of chickens.

As there was no reply to the insults, Paddon asked for food. After an interval a wicker basket was lowered from a watch-tower above the gate. The basket contained cooked rice, bean-curd, roasted chestnuts and a slice of pickled pork. Paddon, without thanking the donors, carried the food to a small thick-et. After eating ravenously he made a bed of leaves and laid himself down. The night, smothering, sickly, odorous, closed in on the village. In his disturbed slumber Paddon had visions of the Stairs of Compassion. . . . Terrible visions.

AT dawn the white marauder beat up on the gates, demanding food, lots of food. They lowered a pot of bamboo soup. He drank it hurriedly and flung the pot against the wall, shattering it. He howled for more. He wished food for two days. He shouted threats: if the yellow dogs would not give it to him, he would scale the wall and beat up the head-men.

Somewhat awed by his words, they lowered peanuts (*lo-hua-shêng*), ham (*huo-tui*), and eggs preserved in lime (*pi-tan*). Paddon gathered them up and started up the lower slopes of the Hills of Tai-Ping.

Hard traveling now. The slopes were covered with stunted thorn-bushes that clawed at Paddon as he climbed. And

the heat weighed upon him. He was possessed of a desire to go back to the village, scale the wall, and beat up the inhabitants. The notion of taking a walled town single-handed pleased him.

"I'll do it when I'm coming back," he decided. "It'll be fun after I get the swag."

At midday, from the top of a steep hill, Shan Paddon had his first glimpse of the Stairs of Compassion. The sight brought gurgles from his throat. He stared at it, eyes and mouth open wide, fists clenched with a strange nervous excitement that tensed his every fiber.

IT was a devil's ladder to the stars, a nightmare affair that bred terror. It was in its conception something that had the grandeur of the *Chang-chêng*, the Great Wall that runs from Lao-lung-tou over mountains and plains to Chia-yü-kuan; but the Stairs of Compassion possessed a snaky horror that the Great Wall lacks.

Shan Paddon's eyes saw a mile-long stairway that meandered up the side of a monstrous cliff. Into the face of the rocky wall, stout poles had been driven; and these, unsupported at the outer end, formed the treads of the stairs—with the depths grinning at the climber who braved the ascent. With its twists and turns, the stairway moved across the face of the frightening cliff, the last rung being fully half a mile beyond the starting-point. Allowing for the incline, Paddon guessed the actual height of the stairs at something like a thousand yards, with approximately that number of poles. It was a construction such as can only be found in China; a laborious work finished by coolie labor, and costing only the lives of the workers, their rice and the timber.

Paddon, plunging forward, was possessed of a pricking fear—a strange feeling of terror that struck at different parts of his body; it affected his legs, then his arms, and at times moved the scalp of his head in a sickening manner.

The massive stairway warned him off in the hot silence. But Shan Paddon had an incentive. The One Who Had Died Hurriedly had spoken often of the treasure of the heights; so had the Book of Chung-Kuo. "*Treasure*," said the Book, "*that the gods give only to the righteous*." Shan Paddon wasn't righteous, but he had large paws for grabbing treasure. And this expedition was his one chance of acquiring a large sum.

It was late in the afternoon when Paddon reached the lowest rung in the mighty ladder. He placed his hands upon it and stared upward at the sloping line of wooden poles thrust like gigantic toothpicks into the face of the cliff. They made him dizzy. He flung himself on his back to get a better view of the strange construction. The enormous structure looked like the skeleton of some prehistoric serpent that had died while climbing the cliff, and whose ribs by some strange alchemy had clung to the rock through the ages.

Paddon told himself that the climb would be exceedingly dangerous. Each wooden tooth was two and a half *chih* above its predecessor—just half an inch short of an English yard. And the higher pole was one and a half *chih* (twenty-one inches) in front of its forerunner. The climb, therefore, demanded a certain amount of acrobatic dexterity. Paddon decided that he would camp for the night at the foot of the stairway and begin the climb at sunrise.

He took out the Book of Chung-Kuo and read a verse regarding the Stairs:

*Its steps surge up to heaven,
Leaving the gross earth far behind,
Climbing, climbing towards the Treasure
Left there by the gods, so kind.*

When night fell, there came whispers from the tangled bushes through which he had approached the stairway. He found that a number of the villagers, pushed by curiosity, had followed him, and were watching from the long grass. This white barbarian who had cursed them was full of madness: he evidently intended to climb the Stairs of Compassion!

Spitefully, Paddon pulled his revolver and fired in the direction from which the whispers came. There was a shriek of pain, then silence—a choking silence.

The shriek, in some strange way, brought the specter of the One Who Had Died Hurriedly. She hadn't shrieked when he clutched her throat; but nevertheless she appeared immediately after the cry of pain came from the bushes. She rose with dreadful clarity, framed in a pastel light. Beside her was the red lacquer box in which she kept her treasured knickknacks: the white rabbit with the pink eyes, the four-stringed guitar with which she accompanied herself when she sang the poems of Li-Po, the broken Swiss clock whose wooden rooster refused to crow.



Paddon, awakened abruptly, saw the One Who Had Died Suddenly—far out from the rocky wall, treading on air! "Touch of sunstroke," thought Paddon.

Paddon thrust a big hand over his eyes: the hand that had killed her; the fingers that had left the stammel-colored marks on her white throat. . . . His hand became transparent. He saw through it—saw her more clearly than ever. With curses tumbling over each other, he turned his face to the rock.

IN the pearly light before sunup, Paddon took off his shoes and helmet. He wondered if the villagers were still watching from the bushes. He thought of firing another shot at them, but the fear of her specter held his hand. The ghostly visitation shook his nerves, and he wanted all his courage for the climb.

With the bag of food strapped to his shoulder, he mounted the first rung, then leaning forward, pulled himself onto the second. The climb was on.

He had planned the ascent during the long night. He would move slowly. Halfway up the face of the cliff the stairs, so it seemed from the ground, reached an alcove in the rocky face. Paddon told himself that he would reach this alcove by midday. There he would rest during the hours of intense heat, and continue the climb in the afternoon. With luck he would reach the summit before the night closed in.

Besides the muscular effort required to reach each succeeding rung, Paddon

found that before venturing his full weight upon a pole, he had to study carefully its condition. The great wooden teeth had not been renewed for countless years, and decay produced by weather and wood-boring insects was noticeable.

He reached the tenth step. Cut into the log on its topside was the Chinese word *Shih*, meaning *ten*. Thereafter he found that every tenth log carried an inscription. *Erh-shih* (twenty), *San-shih* (thirty), *Ssu-shih* (forty), and so forth.

The forty-fourth rung was missing. It had snapped off some six inches from the cliff in which it had been embedded; dry rot had finished it.

Paddon cursed. With difficulty he could, standing on the forty-third rung with arms lifted, touch with his fingertips the forty-fifth pole in the frightening stairway. He was now more than a hundred feet from the ground. A fall would either kill or cripple him.

He decided to make a leap for the forty-fifth. Chances had to be taken. The Book of Chung-Kuo had spoken of the difficulties to reach the treasure. It had even given the length of the Stairs: *I-l-ti pu-ch'a shên-mo-pa*, something under a mile.

At the moment when Paddon straightened himself to spring, an uproar broke



out below him. Brass gongs made an infamous noise; firecrackers exploded. Paddon glanced downward: the villagers had come out of the bushes, and now, aware of the climber's predicament, were making frightful noises to scare off the demons that had broken the rung in the stairs.

Their kindly efforts were not pleasing to Shan Paddon. "Yellow lice!" he thought. "When I come back, I'll climb that wall and belt hell out of them."

He spat at them, turned and sprang at the forty-fifth rung. He dragged himself upright and went on. The clamor ceased.

He passed *Ch'i-shih* (seventy) *Pa-shih* (eighty), *Chiu-shih* (ninety). On *I-pai* (one hundred) he stretched himself full length on the log and breathed deeply. The climb was harder than he had imagined it would be. Although he was an unusually powerful man, the ascent to him was tough going.

Again there came a horrifying break in the line of huge toothpicks. One hundred and eleven was missing. A mass of rock had rolled from the brink of the

mountain and carried it away. More frightening, this gap. Over three hundred feet from the ground. That strange movement of the scalp was upon him, a sickening commotion of the stomach.

The watching villagers knew of the missing rung. Up came the clamor of the gongs, the fierce sputtering of crackers, the shouts and prayers. Shan Paddon moistened his lips. He fought the leeching terror bred of the gulf that lay between him and the ground—the gulf of thin hot air.

HE sprang. Big arms went around the pole. He dragged himself on to it. He saw the moonlike faces far below him, upturned like yellow sunflowers. The sudden silence that followed the devil-frightening uproar was startling.

Tirelessly Paddon drove upward. With machinelike motions he dragged himself from one rung to another. Sweat poured from him.

High above the abyss was the treasure of which the One Who Had Died Hurriedly had spoken in her strange manner. "What kind of treasure?" he had

asked her again and again. "The greatest treasure in the world," she had whispered. "The very greatest."

The wooden pegs rose in a tantalizing flight. He came to *Erh-pai* (two hundred); *San-pai* (three hundred); and at last, completely exhausted, he reached the alcove in the rock at *Wu-pai*, the five hundredth step in the tremendous stairway. The sun was slipping westward.

Paddon flung himself down on the ledge of rock and decided that he would call it a day. He would sleep there in the niche, and continue the climb in the morning. He was conscious of a slight vertigo. The devils of the great heights were teasing him.

DURING the night Paddon had a frightening experience: He was awakened abruptly by what he thought a flash of lightning; and on looking outward from the niche, he saw something that crisped the hair on his neck.

She, the One Who Had Died Suddenly was stooping over the red box. Far out from the rocky wall, treading on air! Every movement was plain to Paddon: the slim beautiful hand that was like a flower was lifting the lid of the box.

Paddon, wide-eyed, body jammed hard against the rock, gurgled with amazement. From the opened box sprang the white rabbit with the pink eyes, followed by the four-stringed guitar on which she played the accompaniment to the poems of Li-Po, and the broken Swiss clock whose rooster was forever silenced. In space, fifteen hundred feet above the earth, they danced a fandango! She, with the marks of Paddon's fingers on her throat, watched them, smiling.

"It's the heat," thought Shan Paddon. "Touch of sunstroke." He moved his hands before his eyes, but the macabre dance went on. The jiggling of the white rabbit was fiendishly clever. The guitar clasped the Swiss clock, and pirouetted out into the night till Paddon's jaws ached with the strain of watching them.

With the first light they fled, making a mocking bow to Shan Paddon as they disappeared. The One Who Had Died Suddenly again pointed to her throat.

Paddon started upward. He was unnerved by the night, and he fumbled a little. The devils of the depths with unseen fingers tugged at his tattered trousers, took quick jerks at his wrists and ankles. He cursed fervently.

Now he reached the five-hundred-and-twenty-seventh step, and sprang at the

one above. Terror like a chilled blade struck him as his hands touched it. The great log had been eaten out by wood-grubs. It was a mere shell that crumpled in the grip of his huge paws!

With amazing speed Paddon drew himself upright, while the rung crackled beneath him. With a horrible wheezy noise its spongelike body moved from under him. It was starting on the horrifying drop. He sprang from it, a cry of terror in his throat. He had clutched the next toothpick, but he was unable to pull himself onto it. His eyes wished to follow the log, hurtling downward, and their desire numbed his muscles.

The crash came up to him minutes after it had slid like a disturbed serpent from beneath his feet. With the crash came the clamor of gongs and the sputter of crackers. The villagers were still watching his ascent. . . .

Paddon drew himself onto the log he clutched. He straddled it, wiped the sweat of fear from his face, and looked upward. Against the porcelain-white of the morning sky he saw the last wooden fang of the Stairs. Its remoteness made him shiver.

Lin-pai (six hundred). He couldn't look at the ground now. When he did so, a nausea clutched him, and he distinctly felt the fingers of the height-devils on his ankles. . . .

He kept his eyes on the porcelain-white sky—Chinese sky—dead, like the eye of a fish. Everything was dead in the country. When he got the treasure, he would clear out. New York, London, Paris! Hell, what a swath he would cut! Drink, women, sport. His mind clung to the joys ahead of him, and he climbed steadily.

Ch'i-pai (seven hundred). Biting into it, now, he exulted. Nothing could beat Shan Paddon if there was treasure at the other end. Nothing at all! That humbug of the dancing rabbit was just a delusion brought on by a touch of the sun.

AT the eight hundredth and tenth step (*Pa-pai-i-shih*), Shan Paddon was struck with something akin to a gastric upheaval. His stomach rolled over. A sticky sickening horror clutched him. The glue of dark despair hardened suddenly around his heart: *two of the great toothpicks were missing!* A bulge in the cliff had prevented him from seeing the break till he was right up to it.

Paddon refused to believe his eyes: this frightful gap couldn't be there! It

was a blunder, a trick of the devils who were persecuting him. With parched lips he cursed the breach in the stairway. The sound of gongs mixed with his blasphemy; the upturned sunflower faces were watching him.

FOR long minutes Paddon's brain could not function. Then with infinite slowness it attacked the problem: It considered the pitted side of the cliff; it examined the two splintered tusks left by the displaced rungs; it juggled his chances, adding and subtracting: If Paddon had the fingers of a gecko, he could, by inserting them in cuplike holes in the face of the rock, reach the first broken tusk. There he had standing-room, if he glued himself tightly to the wall.

The brain assured Paddon that he could not leap from this point; that was impossible. But by again taking enormous chances, he could move upward and forward to a two-inch ledge. Getting leverage on this ledge, he could make a spring at the eight hundred and thirteenth rung. Purely impersonal was the brain. It put forward the strategic plan. Could Mr. Paddon find the nerve?

Paddon glanced back at the horrible ladder up which he had come. The effort he had made up to this point was a swizzle-stick that now stirred his courage; and whatever his faults, this man without a country—who called himself Shan Paddon because that was not his name—had courage. He moved against the face of the rock and endeavored to turn himself into adhesive flesh.

Louder, the gongs far below him. The dull hum of chanting voices; prayers; big firecrackers now. The yellow lice were trying to scare the devils!

But the devils were active. Their fingers were in the little puffs of air. Their spite was shown in the splintery rays that struck the cliff and partly blinded Paddon. Sullenly, ferociously, Paddon fought them. With tenacious bleeding fingers he clung to the wall, the wall that seemed alive and malicious. His disordered brain thought it detected a movement of the cliff, a vast and unholy shrug as if it would throw off the human insect that clung to it.

Louder and louder the gongs. Giant firecrackers—*bang, bang, blup!* They knew his danger, his terrible danger.

Paddon put a sockless foot forward. He was on the splintered tusk of eight hundred eleven. Room for one foot only! Standing cranelike, he sucked in

air. His fingers were gummed to the rock—gummed with blood. . . .

Above and in front was the ledge. He considered it. He was fighting the devils now. They would throw him into the abyss, would they? He, Big Paddon of Ching-chou-fu, killer, tough guy, bad *hombre*, would fight them back.

He took a quick upward step. He was on the ledge. It seemed as if he, like the white rabbit, were standing on air. As the depths clawed at him, he sprang. . . .

He clasped the pole and drew himself up and onto it. He punched it with his fists. Did it think to throw him to the devils that pursued him up this ladder?

He moved upward with a new rush of confidence brought by his conquest of the gulf. One after the other he straddled the poles.

Chiu-pai (nine hundred). There was a strange intoxication upon him now, a belief that something—something so extraordinary that it was beyond the reach of his imagination—awaited him on the top of the cliff.

Now he counted the poles that were to come, ticking off the remnant: Sixty-eight, sixty-seven, sixty-six. They were dwindling fast.

His excitement was nearly his undoing. The last tooth in the stairway was a little more than the regular two and a half *chih* from the cliff-edge. Shan Paddon sprang at a piece of rock, but the rock broke under the clutch of his right hand. For an instant the devils of the depths saw victory; then lean fingers seized the wrist of the climber—fingers that belonged to a man who had thrown himself face downward on the edge of the cliff when he saw Paddon's peril. Paddon's dangling feet found the pole, rested there awhile; then with the help of the lean fingers of the man above, he drew himself onto the grassy ledge and dropped exhausted.

PADDON turned after a long interval, and examined the man who had helped him. He was a dignified Chinaman. As Paddon stared at him, he thought that this man by some strange necromancy had brought an unearthly calm and repose to his features—the calm of the stone Buddha at Yün-kang.

Paddon surlily thanked him. The man waved thanks aside. "Why," he asked, "has the honorable stranger climbed the Stairs that no one has climbed for more than thirty years—

why has the honorable visitor not used the basket?"

"The basket?" gasped Paddon.

The man rose and led Paddon for a hundred yards along the cliff edge. There, attached to a huge beam, was a pulley-wheel threaded with an endless cable made of plaited bamboo strands dropped down the side of the rock. To this cable were attached two baskets, one weighted to counterbalance the load that might be put in the other. A rather scary way of attempting the ascent or descent, but certainly easier than the stairway.

"Didn't the villagers tell you?" asked the Chinaman.

Paddon cursed. "The swine told me nothing!" he cried. Then, after a pause, he shouted: "And she didn't tell me! Not a word! All her talk was of the Stairs! Why—why, she must—she must have left by this!"

THE beady eyes of the man were on the angry sweaty face of his visitor. The calm, so evident in his manner, was shattered by Paddon's last sentence. "Do you," he asked, "do you mean the Restless Bird?"

Paddon gulped and nodded. His disordered mind fished for the story—the fine story that he had made up to tell this old fool who lived on the top of the mountain.

"The Restless Bird left by this basket," said the man quietly. "I have thought that she would come back by it." He paused, then put a question: "Have you anything to tell me of her?"

Paddon would have liked time to rehearse the story. The tension produced by the climb had scattered the threads a little, and he knew that an hour's reflection would strengthen it a lot, but his own outcry about the manner in which the girl had left the mountain forced him to the immediate telling.

Slowly and carefully he began, the eyes of the Chinaman fixed upon his face, waiting, so it seemed, to test every word that fell from Paddon's lips.

Paddon was a little amazed at his own cleverness. As he proceeded with the story, he nearly convinced himself that it was true: There was the night he had found her in the native city (*Hu-tsên*) of Shanghai. He flung in details with fine carelessness. She was leaning against the façade of a shop, a food-shop. He saw at once that she was ill, very ill; and hungry.

He, Paddon, had addressed her. Her words told him that what he had surmised was true. She confessed that she was alone and friendless. She had no money with which to buy food, and she was afraid she had contracted malaria.

"She hadn't eaten anything for three days," said Paddon. "No *cash*. Nothing to buy a bowl of rice."

He saw the eyes of the listener flicker with pain, and he kept on. This was good stuff. "When she spoke to me, she nearly fell," he cried. "So weak! Couldn't stand on her legs. I caught hold of her and held her up. Asked her what I could do. She said: 'Let me alone. I'm going to throw myself into the Whangpoo.'"

"I said: 'No, no! Let me help you. You're young and beautiful. It isn't nice to die. The Whangpoo is cold and dirty.'" He paused for a moment, and the image of the One Who had Died Hurriedly came up before him. Gosh, she *was* beautiful that time he had first met her! "Her hands were like little flowers fastened to her wrists," he went on. "Her face was sweet; and her throat—her throat—"

He stumbled when he tried to describe the beauty of her throat. What a damned fool he was to mention her throat. Those fingermarks shot up between him and the listener—five of them. . . . Four fingers and his thumb.

He wondered if the Chinaman had noticed the interruption. He might not have detected the stumble. Hurriedly he tried to cover up the break. "I told her about a sister of mine," he stammered. "Good woman—missionary, y'know. Sister named Mary. Older than me. Likes to help people that are down and out. Spends a lot of money on them."

PADDON thought he was on a good line here. He spun a dozen paragraphs about his imaginary sister. He was warming up to the work. He knew he was telling a good story, although the Chinaman, after the first flicker of pain that came into his eyes, remained unmoved. Of course the break about the throat had been unfortunate.

"I took her to Mary's house," he continued. "Couldn't walk. Rikishas—*Tung-yang-cho*. Mary lives on Nanking Road near the Bund. Know Shanghai? Yes? Well, Mary's house is quite close to the Palace Hotel. Nice house."

"Told Mary all about how I'd found her. Mary was awfully upset. Carried her up the stairs and put her to bed."



"What you trying to bluff me for?" Paddon snarled. "You've got the treasure here, so shell out!"

Got a doctor for her. Good doctor. Big chap from the Concession. He said she was bad. Very bad."

Paddon paused for breath. The listener put a question. How much time had passed since the meeting of the honorable stranger and the Restless Bird had taken place?

Shan Paddon could answer this truthfully—the first words of truth in his story. It was exactly four months. Four months to a day. For a moment he reflected on the shortness of the acquaintanceship between him and the

woman who the ghouls named the One Who had Died Hurriedly. Well, women who were stubborn didn't stay long in his favor. Of course, a tragic break such as had happened in the present case was rare. His affairs of the heart had mostly been with women of the half-world, and had ended when he had thrown the lady out, or she had left him for some more agreeable and less ferocious mate.

"Yes, just four months," he repeated. "Four months since the night I brought her to my sister's house. It seems longer, but it isn't. She was sick, I tell you."

Now Paddon waited. It was up to the yellow man to put a question. This story-telling against silence was a little tiring. Paddon met the gaze of the other, determined to bait him into an inquiry.

"And now?" queried the Chinaman. "Has the honorable stranger anything to tell me of the Restless Bird?"

"She is dead," said Paddon. "Dead."

The man's face showed no signs of distress. He stared at the big white man as if the beady eyes were trying to see into the very soul of the ruffian.

Paddon knew that he had reached the apogee of his romance. He rose to the occasion. He brought up the machine-guns and the heavy artillery. He talked as he had never talked in his life.

His sister Mary had waited hand and foot on the dead girl. Gosh, how Mary had tried to save her life! Day and night. Nurses and doctors. Specialists from the Concession—French, English, American, German. "All the big shots," he cried. "Fellows—fellows that wouldn't come before they got their fee. You know, big guys that didn't want Chinese patients. But Mary got them. Mary had to have them for her. Money no object. 'Bring them in if you've got to drag them by their hair,' that's what Mary said to me. Gold-hunters, those big doctors. Cost a plenty."

Paddon was perspiring now. The other was calm, frightfully calm. Mentally Paddon cursed his control. Here was the point where the yellow swine should show emotion and thus create the atmosphere that the story-teller required.

Paddon drew the Book of Chung-Kuo from his bag. The dusk was closing in on the mountain-top. He, Paddon, would show the fool the book, and make the touch as quick as possible. There was something frightening about the frigid manner in which the Chinaman had listened.

"Listen," said Paddon. "Listen to me! When she was dying, she gave my sister Mary this book. It's got her name in it. Look at it."

THE Chinese took the volume. He glanced at the ideograph in vermilion ink. He nodded slightly. Paddon went on:

"She said to my sister Mary, she said: 'Get your brother to go to this place, this Stair of Compassion, and ask the old gentleman to pay you back the money you have spent on me. Show him the

book, and tell him what you have done. He's got treasure. Lots of treasure."

"Treasure?" repeated the Chinaman.

"Yes, treasure!" snapped Shan Paddon. Getting angry now, was Paddon; this yellow fool was attempting to bluff him. "Why," he cried, "she did nothing else but chatter of treasure all the time she was sick. And it's in the book. I've read about it in the book."

A FAINT smile crossed the face of the Chinese. "Yes, Chung-Kuo wrote of the treasure," he agreed. "Chung-Kuo was a great poet. He climbed the Stairs many, many years ago. He knew of the treasure."

Paddon was angry now. "Then what are you trying to bluff me for?" he snarled. "I've come a long way to get paid for what me and my sister Mary did for your girl. You've got the treasure, so shell out!" This was not exactly according to plan; but the frigidity of the Chinaman brought out the brutal qualities of his caller.

"The treasure that is here is yours," said the man, quietly. "The treasure of which the Restless Bird spoke, and about which Chung-Kuo wrote."

Shan Paddon was puzzled. There was a trap here, surely. The cunning devil was fooling him. The strange silence of the mountain-top, mystical, frightening, pressed around him, holding back the question that fought for utterance.

At last he got it out: "Then where is it?" he screamed.

The Chinaman waved a yellow hand at the dusky clumps of bamboo, fairy-like in the half darkness. He spoke in a gentle undertone. "The treasure that is here is peace," he said. "Great and abiding peace. It is the Heavenly Mountain where the soul breathes—where it has been known for many hundreds of years. There is no gold or silver here, no worldly treasure. In the history written by Ou Yang-hsiu, who wrote of the Five Dynasties Period, it is told how thousands climbed the Stair of Compassion to find the treasure of peace. They say—"

Paddon sprang forward at that moment. His fist struck the Chinaman full in the face. As he fell backward, Shan Paddon fell on top of him, screaming curses. The climb, the nervous tension produced by the telling of the infamous falsehoods, the shock that came with the knowledge that there was no treasure, made him a madman.

A slight noise that came from a path in the bamboo clump halted the battering fists of Shan Paddon. He got to his knees and peered at the shadowy path. Some one was coming.

Paddon unloosed a gurgle of terror as a figure broke from the bamboos. He held up his hands as if to shield himself from a blow. There at the end of the path, plain against the silvery bamboos, was the One Who had Died Hurriedly! But still not as Paddon had seen her for the last time. *The throat was bare, and upon its snowy whiteness there was no sign of a fingermark.*

Terror seized Shan Paddon, a dreadful terror. Whether this was the girl he had left for dead, who had regained consciousness while his paid ghouls were carrying her away, or her phantom, his one thought was to get away from the sight of the willowy figure that regarded him with eyes distended with fear. He thought of the basket, and the endless cable of plaited strands that ran down the side of the cliff. He had stepped back from it when the old man had brought it to his notice, stepped back with uneasy qualms, but now it was a means of escape from her—of swift escape!

Paddon, on his feet now, rushed toward the cliff-edge. The empty basket was at the top, the loaded one at the other end of the rope. Holding the cable, he flung himself into the basket. She, the woman, was running toward the man on the ground.

PADDON immediately found that the compensating weight was never intended to match a poundage like his own. His big hands clung to the cable to halt the speed of the descent, but the plaited strands cut his palms. The cable was a thing of fire as it slipped through his great paws. It was trying to destroy him. The sweat of agony was on him as he struggled with it.

Halfway down the side of the cliff the loaded basket, surging upward, struck the arms of Paddon and tore them from the writhing cable. He grabbed again and again for it as it whistled by him. It avoided him. It broke from his grip when his fingers clutched it. It hummed a death-song as he rushed at terrifying speed toward the ground. . . .

The villagers found Shan Paddon sitting in the basket at the foot of the cliff. Cautiously they approached him.

He couldn't speak; he couldn't walk.

They were kind to him. They carried him to the village and nursed him. They thought that the gods of peace who lived on the mountain-top with the Chinaman and his daughter the Restless Bird—the girl who had gone away but had come back again weak and ill from an accident that had injured her throat—had become angry with the big man and had sent him swiftly down the cliff in the basket.

They discovered that Shan Paddon had come from Shanghai. They thought it better to start him for that city where he might have friends. He couldn't stand upright, and walking was out of the question. A pious man of the village owned a donkey, the same donkey that had rushed through the closing gates on the afternoon Paddon had reached the village. The pious man offered the beast. They put the battered and speechless bad-man on the donkey and started him on the long road toward the coast.

MONTHS later Shan Paddon reached Poo-tung, that crowded native suburb east of the Whangpoo and opposite Shanghai. Kind-hearted people had answered his dumb appeals on the route, and had divided their meager food with him. He hadn't spoken a word during the journey.

At the Sing-poh-mun Gate, leading from the French Concession into the native city, a friend of former days recognized Paddon. The friend stepped swiftly across the roadway and slapped the big man on the shoulder. "Hello, Shan!" he cried. "What you ridin' the donk for? Say, what's up? Don't you know me? Why—why, you're Shan Paddon, aint you? Big Paddon of Ching-chou-fu?"

Shan Paddon blinked, moistened his lips, and stared at the friend. His name stirred some far-off memory within his unhinged brain. He groped for it, lost it, then smiled like a child who has discovered something pleasing.

"No," he whispered. "No, no. I'm—I'm a white rabbit with pink eyes. I can—I can dance on air."

"Gone nuts," muttered the friend as he watched Paddon go jogging into the human sea. "Plain nuts. Nice crimson rabbit, 'e would be!" As an afterthought he added: "If he got his rights, 'e oughter 'ave danced on air twenty years ago. Crimson rabbit, me eye!"

Another fine story by James Francis Dwyer will appear in an early issue.

Made in America

II—RED IRON ORE

THREE of the Great Lakes (see any atlas) are traversed in this Odyssey of red iron ore. It is a log, the diary of a ship and its men on one cruise. The facts are specific. The E. C. Roberts was a boat. So was the Minch. Riding up Lake Michigan, they passed through Death's Door; the lake storms were ugly. At Escanaba, loading red ore, they "looked like red devils." The crew of the Minch thumbed their noses and taunted, "We'll see you in Cleveland next Fourth of July." But the E. C. Roberts got there ahead of the fleet. A crew of "bold boys" they were, even if they say so them-

selves. The singer is humble, "Now my song is ended, I hope you won't laugh." The tune is old Irish; the repeated line with each verse, "Derry down, down, down derry down," is in old ballads. It is a virile song, a tale of grappling with harsh elements and riding through, a rattling tune and a devil-may-care time-beat. It may, at first, seem just a lilt with a matter-of-fact story. It is more than that; it is a little drama; the singer should know what it is to shovel red iron ore; the singer should know the wide curves of that ship path from Chicago to Cleveland on three Great Lakes (see any atlas).

Arr. H. F. P.

Come all you bold sail - ors that fol - low the Lakes On an i - ron ore ves - sel your

liv - ing to make. I shipp'd in Chi - ca - go, bid a - dieu to the shore, Bound a -

way to Es - ca - na - ba for red i - ron ore. Der - ry down, down, down der - ry down.

- 1 Come all you bold sailors that follow the Lakes
On an iron ore vessel your living to make.
I shipp'd in Chicago, bid adieu to the shore,
Bound away to Escanaba for red iron ore.
Derry down, down, down derry down.
- 2 In the month of September, the seventeenth day,
Two dollars and a quarter is all they would pay,
And on Monday morning the Bridgeport did take
The E. C. Roberts out in the Lake.
Derry down, down, down derry down.
- 3 The wind from the south'ard sprung up a fresh breeze,
And away through Lake Michigan the Roberts did sneeze.
Down through Lake Michigan the Roberts did roar,
And on Friday morning we passed through Death's Door.

Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story

Edited by CARL SANDBURG

Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," etc.

- 4 This pocket she howled across the mouth of Green Bay,
And before her cutwater she dashed the white spray.
We rounded the sand point, our anchor let go,
We furled in our canvas and the watch went below.
- 5 Next morning we hove alongside the Exile,
And soon was made fast to an iron pile,
They lowered their chutes and like thunder did roar,
They spouted into us that red iron ore.
- 6 Some sailors took shovels while others got spades,
And some took wheelbarrows, each man to his trade.
We looked like red devils, our fingers got sore,
We cursed Escanaba and that damned iron ore.
- 7 The tug Escanaba she towed out the Minch,
The Roberts she thought she had left in a pinch,
And as she passed by us she bid us good-by,
Saying, "We'll meet you in Cleveland next Fourth of July!"
- 8 Through Louse Island it blew a fresh breeze;
We made the Foxes, the Beavers, the Skillageles;
We flew by the Minch for to show her the way.
And she ne'er hove in sight till we were off Thunder Bay.
- 9 Across Saginaw Bay the Roberts did ride
With the dark and deep water rolling over her side.
And now for Port Huron the Roberts must go,
Where the tug Kate Williams she took us in tow.
- 10 We went through North Passage—O Lord, how it blew!
And all 'round the Dummy a large fleet there came too.
The night being dark, Old Nick it would scare.
We hove up next morning and for Cleveland did steer.
- 11 Now the Roberts is in Cleveland, made fast stem and stern,
And over the bottle we'll spin a big yarn.
But Captain Harvey Shannon had ought to stand treat
For getting into Cleveland ahead of the fleet.
- 12 Now my song is ended, I hope you won't laugh.
Our dunnage is packed and all hands are paid off.
Here's a health to the Roberts, she's staunch, strong
and true;
Not forgotten the bold boys that comprise her crew.
Derry down, down, down derry down.



Several hundred of these pioneer songs have been gathered by Carl Sandburg, and published in book form by Harcourt, Brace and Company, under the title "The American Songbag."



Happy

A surprising adventure of

By **ROBERT
R. MILL**

Illustrated by Monte Crews

rookie with an explanation: "Sounds like a case of amnesia."

Mr. King greeted this with a snort.

"Cut out your clowning, and I'll slip you some dope. This is the Skipper's birthday."

Mr. David glanced at the far corner of the room, where Captain Charles Field, commanding officer of the Black Horse Troop, was engrossed in a newspaper. Then the Lieutenant shifted his more than six feet of solid bone and muscle so that he could obtain a view of the window.

"He has a nice day for it," was his only contribution.

Mr. King lowered his voice. "Don't you think we have certain obligations?"

Mr. David gave this deep thought. "We might sing, 'Happy Birthday to You,'" he ventured.

Mr. King's disappointment was visible. "You are slipping, Tiny. The Old Man made your last birthday eventful. Thought you might like to return the compliment."

Tiny David's manner was stern. "No more practical jokes," was his verdict. "They always bounce back on me. Besides, it isn't dignified."

Sergeant King waited long enough to make sure that his ears had not played him false, then nodded wisely: "I see."

He joined Messrs. Henry Linton and James Crosby at a table where they shared a newspaper.

"Stick around," he advised, speaking out of the corner of his mouth. "Something tells me we are going to see some action."

But there was nothing in the appearance of Tiny David to justify the pre-

BREAKFAST was only a pleasant memory in the barracks of the Black Horse Troop, New York State Police. While awaiting the sound of the gong that would summon them to morning inspection, the officers and men filed into the living-room to smoke, gossip and glance over the morning papers.

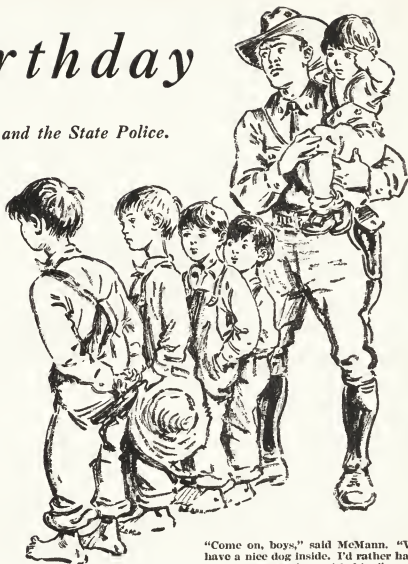
Lieutenant Edward David, last to leave the table, was first to reach the most comfortable chair in the brightest corner of the great room. He dropped into its luxurious depths with a little sigh of contentment; but his pleased smile changed to a frown as Sergeant John King paused before him.

"Know what day this is?" demanded Mr. King.

Mr. David pondered for a full moment. "Thursday," was his verdict. His voice became soothing. "Your name is King. Don't worry." He turned to a

Birthday

Tiny David and the State Police.



"Come on, boys," said McMann. "We have a nice dog inside. I'd rather have you associate with him."

diction. He stretched, extending his somewhat large feet another six inches. He picked up a book, evidently found it too heavy to hold, and returned it to the arm of the chair.

"Yes," Mr. Crosby agreed. "Tiny is lazier than normal. We are going to see action."

The clock at one end of the room struck the hour.

Mr. David leaned forward and twirled the dials of a radio set at his elbow. There was a hum, a squeak, and then the room was filled with the chirping of birds. Mr. David relaxed.

"Good morning," said an unctuous voice. "This is Mr. Cheerful, right on the job, and all ready to start your day right."

"Garumph," came from the corner where Captain Field was sitting.

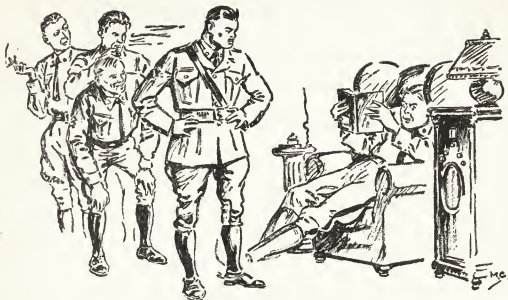
"This," Tiny David told the room at large, "is my idea of a swell program. Instructive and inspirational."

It started off with a little poem, which lauded the ability to smile amid trial and tribulation. There followed a request for an old hymn, which Mr. Cheerful was pleased to grant. There was a thought for the day, which caused Mr. David to nod in hearty agreement, while Max Payton, the top-sergeant, gave a loud groan.

"Garumph-umph," came from Captain Field. He folded his paper, and showed signs of leaving; so Sergeant King, always helpful, quickly engaged him in conversation.

"Either turn that damn' thing down, or turn it off," ordered Captain Field.

Tiny David turned it down, but the voice from the radio, dripping syrup, still carried to every part of the living-



"When you come to the first picture, you'll see that the book is upside down."

room. It appeared that Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Dosenbush, of Chicago, had been married thirty years ago today. There were sound-effects to supply the cheers. There were other couples from Maine to California. Mr. Cheerful read them off with evident glee.

Then he turned his attention to birthdays, starting with persons in the fifties and working up. They learned that Louis Gazok was ninety-two today.

"He's old enough to die," declared Sergeant Payton. "Bury him, and don't bother us about him." He turned to Tiny David. "Schoolmates of yours?"

Mr. David ignored the question. Mr. Linton, who had the ability to think ahead, sought the safety of the hall.

Mr. Cheerful's voice gained strength for his final effort:

"Now we select the Captain of the Guard. That takes us up to northern New York, almost on the Canadian Border, where Uncle Charley Field, known and beloved by all, is celebrating his ninety-sixth birthday. Congratulations, Uncle Charley. As Captain of the Guard, it is your task to bring all these good soldiers back one year from today."

Mr. Cheerful turned away from the microphone.

"Three cheers for Uncle Charley! Hip-hip—"

They cheered in the studio. They started to cheer in the living-room; but the less courageous souls, after a glance at Captain Field, fell silent. Only Messrs. David, King, Crosby and Pay-

ton, hardened sinners all, could truthfully be said to be in good voice on the third and final cheer.

Out in the hall Mr. Linton stifled his mirth, and congratulated himself on his foresight. Right now, he much preferred the hall to the living-room.

Captain Field centered his attention upon Tiny David, who was now buried in his book.

"What are you reading, Lieutenant?"

Tiny David looked up with surprise.

"Book about developing latent fingerprints, Captain."

"That's fine," Captain Field declared. "Nothing like taking an interest in your work. And when you come to the first picture, you'll see that the book is upside down."

The commanding officer beamed upon the occupants of the room.

"A birthday only comes once a year. Strange thing, but I don't feel a bit older. Hope I am not too feeble to make it an interesting day for all of you." The gong sounded, and Captain Field raised his voice: "—Including Mr. Linton."

THE day started quietly enough. Sergeant Payton, watching his step with the same care shown by a structural-steel worker on the seventieth floor in a high wind, began going through the mail. Captain Field, a bulky reminder of disaster to come, sat at his elbow.

The telephone, however, provided an interruption. A farmer who lived eighteen miles from the barracks reported the

theft of three chickens. Captain Field glanced at the notation Payton made on the pad.

"Good job for Crosby," was the commanding officer's verdict. "Let him take a horse. And tell him not to come back until he has found the chickens."

Soon Mr. Crosby departed, mounted on the meanest horse in the stables, and with gloom in his heart.

"There is one bright spot," he assured himself. "I'm the lead-off man. The Skipper will get worse as he goes along."

Then the horse, bearing the rather descriptive name of Beelzebub, did his part to rob Mr. Crosby of this ray of comfort. The last glimpse the barracks had of the pair showed Beelzebub, three feet off the ground, making a desperate effort to rid himself of the presence of Mr. Crosby.

"Good for the horse!" was the verdict of Captain Field. "And good for Crosby."

Then he turned his attention back to the mail, drawing out a large yellow envelope which bore his name, and the legend, "*Personal and Confidential.*" Captain Field opened the envelope and examined the contents.

There was a letter from the agent-in-charge of the nearest field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice. It was brief and to the point:

The Federal men had received reliable information to the effect that one Wolf Dentaud, very much wanted for murder, bank-robbery and a few other crimes, was hiding in northern New York. The F. B. I. men had "turned on the heat." That is, they had visited all known haunts of criminals in the territory and left word that it would be very unhealthy for any person who harbored Mr. Dentaud.

Now they were about to use a bit of psychology. Employing the radio and the newspapers, they allowed it to be known that they knew the exact section in which Mr. Dentaud was hiding. They added the information that his arrest was "only a matter of hours."

"Unless we miss our guess," wrote the agent-in-charge, "this will drive him out into the open; and as you well know, that offers our best chance to pick him up. You have done such splendid work for us in the past, that we take great pleasure in calling upon you again, to watch out for this man. He is really clever, and if he does move,—we are certain he will,—it will be no mad flight. But please do the best you can for us."

Captain Field studied one of a number of cards enclosed. Each card bore the description of Dentaud, with a photograph of his face and fingerprints. The card added the information that Mr. Dentaud had recently been the patient of a plastic surgeon.

Captain Field gave one card to Payton, pocketed one himself, and ordered a clerk to rush a card to each patrol. He put a description of Mr. Dentaud on the teletype. Then he ordered Payton to distribute the remainder among the men in the barracks.

Payton found Tiny David and King in the basement.

"What's the forecast?" asked the former, as he looked carefully at the card, then pocketed it.

"Storm signals all along the coast," said Sergeant Payton, "with no signs of clearing."

They nodded gloomily.

BACK in the office, and still treading warily, Sergeant Payton consulted his duty-sheet.

"If it please the Captain, a dame—a lady—called up yesterday while he was out. She belongs to some sort of lodge that is giving a patriotic play this afternoon. She wants a trooper in uniform for the last scene. A group salutes the flag, or something like that. I told her I didn't know whether the Captain could spare a man for that sort of thing—"

A wave of the hand halted him.

"No reason why we can't spare Linton," ruled Captain Field. "Send him around right away. He can help with the scenery and other preparations. When the crowd begins to arrive, he can direct traffic. Then he can take part in the show. Got her telephone-number?"

Sergeant Payton had.

Captain Field called the number and delighted the woman by outlining the part Mr. Linton would take in the festivities. Then Linton was summoned, and the instructions were repeated in detail. After that, Captain Field called two newspaper reporters and gave them messages which sent them both away from the telephone chuckling.

Captain Field gazed at Sergeant Payton blandly.

"This," he declared, "promises to be quite a day."

Mr. Linton paused in the basement just long enough to deliver a parting shot at Messrs. David and King:

"God help you when he gets to you!"

Then he departed to suffer in the name of female patriotism. . . .

Shortly before eleven o'clock, after a morning in which Payton had not had a minute to call his own, Captain Field paused briefly to gaze with disconcerting sternness at the top-sergeant.

"Don't tell me a young fellow like you can't stand the pace set by an old bird like me!"

"No sir," said Sergeant Payton. He found one ray of hope: There are only twenty-four hours in each day.

FIFTEEN minutes later Sergeant John King's case was disposed of. Mr. King, while an ambitious young man in many respects, had a marked dislike for long walks. That dislike harked back to days in the army, when marches of twenty miles, under full equipment, had been almost the daily order.

When the district game protector called, and requested a trooper to aid him in tracking dogs engaged in running deer, Captain Field brightened visibly.

"King is the man," he asserted.

The commanding officer smiled with satisfaction at the thought of Mr. King trying to keep pace with the Conservation Department man, who loved to walk, who was tireless, and who plowed through the woods at a pace that soon would discourage a horse.

Mr. King, after learning his fate, tarried briefly with Tiny David.

"Give my clothes to my brother," he instructed. "Let my sister have my back pay. The insurance should pay for the funeral. Make it simple." His gesture indicated disgust. "But why bother telling you? You won't be alive by night, either."

But Mr. David enjoyed excellent health for the next half-hour. The sound of an automobile halting in the drive caused him to go to the basement door. There he watched Lieutenant Charles McMann guide five small boys from the car and herd them toward the barracks. The youngest, barely able to walk, made the trip in Lieutenant McMann's arms. He sobbed audibly. The eyes of the other boys were red from weeping.

Mr. David went into action at once.

"Recruiting?" he asked.

Mr. McMann paused long enough to shift his burden to a more comfortable position.

"Didn't know there were any vacancies," he countered. "You thinking of leaving us?"

Just at present this was a painful subject with Mr. David, so he remained silent.

"Come on, boys," said Lieutenant McMann. "We have a nice dog inside. I'd rather have you associate with him."

Again Mr. David's usually facile tongue was silent. The fact that the figure of Captain Field had appeared at a window probably had something to do with it.

"Haven't forgotten you," he told Tiny David. "Something will turn up for you before long."

Tiny David was not happy as he ducked back into the basement.

Inside the barracks, Captain Field regarded the five youngsters with interest. "Cute little shavers. Quarter sizes, like collars."

"They are nice boys," Lieutenant McMann admitted. "Manly little fellows."

"What is the dope?"

Before he replied, McMann shoed his flock into the big living-room, where he placed them in charge of a trooper.

"They lived in a cabin near the foothills, not far from Barston. Their mother died three days ago. Then, to help things along, their father killed himself this morning."

Captain Field and Top-sergeant Payton, both of whom had children of their own, were silent. But something that looked suspiciously like moisture appeared in their eyes.

"No relatives, no friends, no money," McMann continued, his voice gruff.

"That's sure tough," growled Payton. "There are times when you wish you had a million. This is one of those times."

CAPTAIN FIELD nodded. They sat in silence for a minute or two. Then the commanding officer became a policeman again.

"Got to find a place for them."

McMann and Payton had no suggestions.

"Hate to send anybody to an orphan asylum," continued Captain Field.

Again his companions had nothing to offer.

"I have it," said Captain Field, at last. "There is a State school near Albany. Fine place. Boys live in cottages. More like home than an institution. Teach them a trade. Take a lot of wire-pulling, but nothing like trying."

He darted into his private office, and closed the door. Fifteen minutes later he emerged.

"It's a sale." He shrugged his shoulders. "Not like home, but the next-best thing."

They nodded. McMann reached for the telephone.

"Guess I better call the county nurse, and see if she will take them down."

"That hatchet-face!" protested Payton, who had no love for the lady in question.

Captain Field grinned.

"Wait, Mac! Kill two birds with one stone. Tiny can take 'em down. If I know anything about kids, they will make the trip interesting for him." He rubbed his chin with his hand. "Perhaps we can help them a bit."

He turned to Sergeant Payton.

"Break the glad news to Lieutenant David."

PAYTON found Tiny David still holding down the basement. "See those five kids?" he asked.

"Yep. Something tells me this is going to be good."

"You are going to wet-nurse them from here to Albany."

"By automobile?" asked Tiny David hopefully.

"By train," said Sergeant Payton.

"I was afraid of that," Tiny admitted. He shrugged his shoulders. "In that case, might as well shift to civies."

He led the way upstairs, and Payton stood in the doorway while Tiny David hauled out a suit of imported tweed that was his pride and joy.

"Good morning, Mr. Richguy," said the top-sergeant.

"A little number I picked up in Montreal," Mr. David said casually.

Mr. Payton inspected the coat with the manner of a man who knows. Then he announced his verdict:

"If you worked in a bank, I would say it was time for the examiners to call."

Mr. David ignored this, as he began to transfer the contents of the pockets of his uniform to the pockets of the tweed.

"Just here in the lodge, Tiny," began Mr. Payton, "how did you frame that radio stunt?"

Mr. David gazed at him with injured innocence.

"I wouldn't know that, Max. But I imagine that some bright guy wrote to Mr. Cheerful, asking him to honor Old Uncle Charley."

"Glad to know that you admit that you are bright," was Mr. Payton's only comment.



He decided to offer his chocolate to the other passengers; he held the sticky mass under the nose of the pretty girl.

Their next stop was the office.

"You have twenty minutes to round-up those youngsters, and get on the train," declared Captain Field. "Lieutenant McMann and I will go to the station with you." He paused. "Another thing: If you know when you are well off, you will arrive in Albany without incident."

"Yes sir," said Tiny David.

The drive to the station was uneventful. Tickets were purchased. Tiny David started his small charges toward the smoker.

"No," ruled Captain Field, "take them in the coach. Those boys aren't going to inhale smoke all the way to Albany."

MR. DAVID entered the coach; he found a place across the aisle from an elderly woman. A short distance away sat a remarkably pretty girl. All the occupants of the car watched the new arrivals with interest.

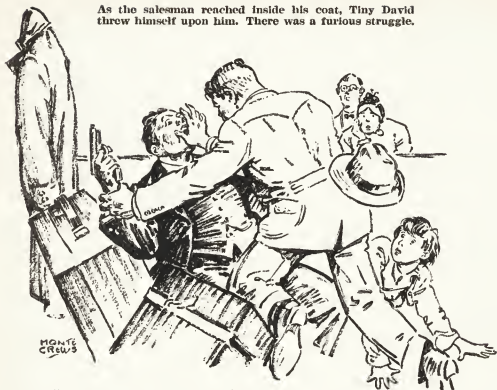
Tiny David reversed the back of one seat and found a place for his brood. Three boys occupied one seat, Tiny and two boys the other. The youngest immediately climbed on the trooper's lap. The excitement of the trip had temporarily banished the children's grief.

The elderly woman looked up. "All yours?" she asked.

The question was so sudden that Mr. David was off-guard.

"Yes," he said. He flushed. "No. What I mean is—"

As the salesman reached inside his coat, Tiny David threw himself upon him. There was a furious struggle.



"I see," said the woman. Her voice was cold. She apparently lost all interest in the family.

Just before the train started, Captain Field and Lieutenant McMann entered the coach and paused before Tiny David and his charges.

"Everything all right?" asked Captain Field.

Youthful cries of assent greeted him. He extended his hand.

"Good luck," he said.

Tiny David remained silent. He knew something was coming, but he refused to furnish any cues.

"All aboard!" came the cry of a trainman.

The two men walked slowly toward the vestibule. As they passed the pretty girl, Captain Field spoke in an undertone—an undertone was audible all over the car.

"Very decent of the Parole Board. Let's hope he has learned a lesson."

"Not only for his sake," added Lieutenant McMann, "but for the sake of the children."

The train was in motion, so Tiny David contented himself with shaking his fist at the two men, who now stood on the platform outside the window. They shook their heads sadly, as though prepared for the worst.

The elderly woman across the aisle gathered up her belongings, preparatory

to moving away from this source of contamination.

"May I help you?" asked Tiny David.

"No, thank you." Her voice was icy.

THE train had covered a good five miles when the oldest boy spoke:

"How far is it to where we are going, Pop?" His lips quivered a bit, but he asked the question gamely.

Tiny David sighed. He spoke in a low tone:

"Who told you to call me Pop?"

The boy hesitated.

"That man who sits at the desk with the telephones." He fished in his pocket and produced a quarter. "He gave me this."

Tiny David mentally entered a charge against Top-sergeant Payton.

"Did he tell you to talk loud?" he inquired.

"Yes," the boy admitted, and he produced another quarter. "He gave me this for calling it out loud." After a search a third quarter appeared. "And he gave me this for remembering to call you that often."

The boy studied Tiny David's face anxiously.

"It's all right, aint it?"

Mr. David had reached the stage where nothing mattered—much.

"Sure. I like it."



"The man said you would," the boy declared.

Then there was a lull, during which Tiny David produced the papers covering the case, and studied them. A shadow crossed his face.

Poor little devils, they surely had a tough break! And they were mountain boys. They would hate the city, and hate the school. His own fierce love for the open spaces increased his sympathy.

"But you aren't my pop," declared the oldest boy, a sob in his voice.

"I'll try to take his place," said Tiny David.

"Cigars — cigarettes — chewing-gum!"

It was the cry of the train butcher, making his first round.

Tiny David bought gum, and distributed it, hoping to create a diversion. The crackle of spearmint blended with the roar of the train. Outwardly it was a picture of contentment.

"Nice red apples!" called the butcher.

Gum was discarded in favor of apples. The five crunched noisily and happily. It was some time later that the youngest boy, feeling the need for a handkerchief, rubbed his mouth against Tiny David's sleeve.

"Have a heart," begged Mr. David. "Here." He produced a handkerchief, and made needed repairs about the mouth of the youngster. Youthful hands seized

the handkerchief. Tiny David surrendered it. The boy waved it at the occupants of the car impartially. Then he centered his attention on the pretty girl.

Tiny David looked back. The girl was waving her handkerchief at the youngster. She was smiling. Tiny David smiled. The girl ceased smiling.

"Get your paper-shell almonds!"

Mr. David endeavored to cover his confusion by purchasing a liberal supply, which he distributed forthwith. The shells added nothing to the appearance of the interior of the coach, but all hands appeared happy.

Then this amusement lagged.

"I wants my muvver," sobbed the youngest boy.

"All the latest magazines! Today's papers!" came next.

Tiny David hastily bought. They climbed on him and over him as he read the "funnies." When that sport was exhausted, they explored the periodicals themselves, with frequent appeals to Tiny David for information.

"Look!" The cry came from the next to the youngest, as he pointed to a picture. "Dis lady aint got on no clothes."

The elderly woman who had changed her seat gave vent to a snort of indignation. Tiny David heard her remark that a man of his type *would* place literature of that sort in the hands of children! She said she believed that some action should be taken. Mr. David only shrugged; his charges were happy.

The train's stop at a station provided a diversion. Tiny David glanced out the window and sighed. The trip was endless, seemingly.

A TRAVELING salesman, with three sample-cases, slipped into the seat across the aisle which had been vacated by the elderly woman. He stowed away the cases, showing particular care in the disposal of one. Then he unfolded a newspaper, first winking at the five boys, a procedure which caused them to give cries of delight.

Then the train was in motion again.

"Choklut bars! Choklut bars!"

The butcher was back. Eager cries went up from the five. Mr. David, however, took a firm stand:

"Nothing doing. If you eat any more, you will be sick. And I am not going to have chocolate smeared over everything."

The oldest boy reached for his pocket.

"Nothing doing," Tiny David repeated.

"I want choc'late bar!" The shrill cry went up from the youngest.

The salesman put his paper aside with a flourish.

"Boy," he called to the butcher,—who was on the far side of fifty,—“give us five chocolate bars.” His voice became louder, and he glanced about the car for approval. “Give them to the punks—er, the youngsters.” He centered his glance upon the pretty girl. She looked out the window.

The butcher distributed the chocolate bars among the outstretched hands. They tore wrappers aside and began to eat.

It was warm in the coach; the boys' hands were warm; and this combination has only one effect on chocolate. It began to run. It ran on fingers and mouths; spread to hands and chins; carried to sleeves, and was wiped off on trousers.

Gradually, much of this chocolate found its way to Tiny David's suit of tweed. Some of it was transferred when chocolate-stained clothing rubbed against him, more as grimy hands pawed him. He suffered in silence, mentally writing the tweeds off on the side of loss.

It was the youngest boy who had an inspiration. Generosity may have played some part in it, but it is probable that the fact that he was rather well stuffed on former offerings was the deciding factor. At any rate, he decided to offer his chocolate to the other passengers.

He climbed from Tiny David's lap and held the sticky mass under the nose of the pretty girl. She declined gracefully. Other passengers refused the offering; some with kindness, others brusquely. The youngster was abashed and returned to his seat.

HE was in the aisle when Tiny David went into action.

"Give some to the kind gentleman who bought it for you," he ordered. Tiny David owed that salesman something! He smiled inwardly at the thought of some of the soft chocolate finding a resting-place on the suit well-cut worn by the man across the aisle.

The youngster obeyed the command with pleasure. He toddled across the aisle. He extended the sticky, shapeless mass.

"You want choc'late?" he asked.

The salesman hesitated. He realized that the man in the other seat was paying him in his own coin. He thought rapidly. He checked his first impulse to refuse the offering, and smiled cordially.

"Sure." His manner was gracious. "I'll take a bite. Much obliged."

He took the candy, bit off a small piece, and returned it to the boy, who waited uncertainly.

Then Tiny David had a change of heart. Perhaps the salesman wasn't such a bad sort, after all.

"All right," he told the youngster. "Come on back."

AS the boy climbed onto Tiny David's lap more chocolate was transferred to the tweeds. Then a full stomach, the monotony of the train, and a temporary lull in the chatter of his brothers combined to do their work. The youngster's head sagged. His eyelids began to flutter. The candy remained clutched in his tiny, chocolate-stained hand.

"We will put that over here for future reference," said Tiny David.

He placed the candy on the window-sill. Then he eased the boy to the seat near the window, where he soon was sound asleep. The train roared on.

Tiny David stared out the window. The shapeless mass of candy caught his attention. The soft chocolate bore the imprint of youthful fingers. Above the small prints was the clear impression of a large blunt thumb.

Quite unconsciously, Tiny David bent over to count and classify the print. Then he relaxed. But the result remained in his mind, and kindled some vague spark of memory. He put the thought aside, but it returned.

The trooper tore a page from one of the papers, wrapped the candy in it, and put the package into his pocket. He studied the salesman's face. Nothing to help him there. That was not surprising. Plastic surgeons enjoyed a great vogue in the underworld.

Tiny David stretched and stood up.

"Going up to ease a smoke," he told the oldest boy. "Take care of everybody." He saw a lip tremble. "Be a brave soldier," he added.

"All right," the boy answered.

Tiny David entered the smoker and found an empty seat. He unwrapped the candy. He fished out the card the top-sergeant had given him that morning. Then he went to work. . . .

Ten minutes later, with determination flashing from his eyes, he returned to the coach. The oldest boy was sitting with the salesman. They were talking, but the conversation ceased when the man saw Tiny David.

Then things happened very rapidly. The salesman reached inside his coat. Tiny David threw himself upon him. There was a furious struggle.

The occupants of the coach were in a state of turmoil. Several men ran forward. Past events prompted them to enlist on the side of the salesman.

Just as Tiny David tore an ugly-looking automatic from the hand of the salesman, the conductor entered the car.

"What's this?" he demanded.

The trooper, with one hand firmly gripping the collar of the man on the seat, looked up.

"Lieutenant David, State Police!" He threw open his coat with his free hand, and displayed his badge. "This is Wolf Dentaud. He is wanted for murder."

A murmur went up from the passengers. Mr. Dentaud swore fervently.

"What a break!" he mourned. "The Feds smoke me out of a swell hide-out. The roads is full of them damn' Boy Scouts. I thinks fast and pulls this salesman act, which is good enough to shake two dicks in the station. Then I picks a seat across the way from a bozo with five punks." Mr. Dentaud paused for dramatic effect. "He turns out to be a Boy Scout pulling a nursemaid act. And after I buys chocolate for the punks, that young one has to pull an act that spills the works."

Tiny David's heavy hand stilled the tirade.

Youthful grief had subsided before excitement, and in that excitement a great loyalty had been born. High above the babel of sound came the cry of the oldest boy:

"Hurray for Pop!"

THE conductor wired ahead, and special agents and policemen met the train in Neutorc. They congratulated Tiny David, raised their eyebrows in wonder at the five boys, heard the explanation, and then showered them with kindness. Later they departed with Mr. Dentaud.

Tiny David entered the station waiting-room and parked his brood on a bench near the telephone booths.

"Be good boys," he instructed them.

"You bet, Pop!" came the chorus.

Tiny David entered a booth. The operator put the call through almost at once.

"Captain Field speaking."

"Tiny David, Captain."

"Where are you?" There was an ominous tone in his voice.

"Neutorc," came the answer.

A long silence.

"I stopped off to get the Captain a little birthday present," Tiny David continued.

There was quick action.

"Save your money. You'll need it. When you finally get to Albany, report to Major Harner. He'll be all ready for you."

Tiny David sighed heavily.

"Yes sir. And will the Captain please explain to the Major that I'll be a little late, because I picked up Wolf Dentaud on the train?"

"What's that?"

Tiny David repeated the statement. He added an explanation.

"Mr. Dentaud," he continued then, "is worth just five thousand dollars to the person who picked him up."

He paused to light a cigarette.

"I can't take the reward. But the kid who handed him the chocolate can."

CAPTAIN FIELD cleared his throat. Tiny David smiled. He knew the symptoms.

"Five thousand dollars will last a long time for five kids in the country," Tiny David went on. "I know an old couple. Be tickled to death to have the kids, and will only want what they actually cost. By the time the money is gone, one or two of the kids will be earning a bit. If necessary, the gang can help out—be good for them!"

He chuckled. "That's my birthday present to the Captain."

There was a long pause.

"Bring those kids back on the night train," barked Captain Field. "Give them a big dinner in the diner. Don't put it on your expense-account, because you won't get it. Collect it from me."

There was more throat-clearing. Then Captain Field added:

"You aren't the worst guy in the world, Tiny. I never will have a present I'll enjoy more—even if I live to be ninety-six."

A crooked little grin played over Tiny David's broad face. He placed his lips close to the mouthpiece of the telephone. When he spoke, it was in the sugary tones of Mr. Cheerful, the radio performer:

"Happy birthday, Uncle Charley!" he murmured.

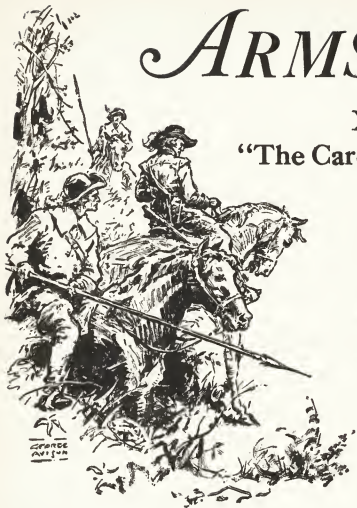
Another lively story by Robert Mill will be a feature of the next (the September) issue.

ARMS and

XIX

"The Cardinal Smiles"

The great Cardinal Richelieu is one of several extraordinary figures evoked out of the past to people this brilliant addition to a fine series that follows down the ages the evolution of warring mankind's weapons.



MY old friend Martin Burnside was away on his travels when the box arrived for him, in my care. I did not hesitate to open it. The box had come from Paris, and the customs inventory showed that it contained a gun over a hundred years old, and therefore was free of duty.

Obviously, another item for the great Burnside collection.

Martin had a mania for collecting old arms of all kinds. He expended all his time, much of his money, and considerably more than his own brains on this hobby; his chief interest lay in obtaining items of authentic history, or ones which displayed the development of weapons in history.

The letter accompanying the box, from a celebrated Paris dealer, stated that the enclosed gun came from the old estate of Soudeilles in Limousin. Curious to see what sort of a weapon it might be, I delved into the box, and came on a mass of old papers. First was the marriage-contract of one Sieur de Montrel to Alix,

daughter of the Sieur de Soudeilles. It was dated 1634.

"Ha, here's romance!" I exclaimed. "A gallant tale of the days of Richelieu, with the lover carrying off the girl from under the Cardinal's very nose!"

A sad mistake on my part, as the other papers bore witness. Marriage, after all, is but the beginning of romance—the great romance of destiny, so much less obvious and so infinitely more majestic than the mere passion of the heart.

The gun came out of its wrappings. It was a cumbersome, heavy old musket, to my none too eagle eye, with an ordinary flint-lock; quite well preserved, but in no way unusual, that I could see. The stock, strangely enough, was apparently of cheap pine wood, much split by age, and deeply blotched and discolored.

Only on closer examination did I note that the barrel of the gun was rifled. No doubt Martin Burnside could have told the whole history of the thing at one glance, but I am less expert in such matters. Beyond a vague knowledge that

MEN

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Illustrated by George Avison

rifling, like breech-loading, was almost as old as guns themselves, but not developed in a practical way for a long time, I knew very little about technicalities.

So I turned to the bundle of documents, both vellum and paper. Almost the first sentence that caught my eye was this, written in the abominable crabbed soldier's fist of *Sieur de Pontis*, that scribbling captain of the guards who went halfway to fame and never finished the route:

In this summer of 1636 the King and the Cardinal were both at Chantilly, where I found them.

Chantilly! Not the elegant parked and turfed ghost of the present day, a lovely shell stuffed with mementoes of the great dead, but the sturdy turreted chateau all alive with action, where lived the Montmorencies, the greatest nobles of France.

A somewhat grim pile then, surrounded by a moat that was a small sea and stocked with the finest fish; beyond that, a forest primeval where the little roe-deer scampered, and great stags wandered deep, and savage wild boars crashed their careless way.

No Montmorency here now, in this summer; but instead, Louis XIII. Four years ago the last Montmorency, shot down and captured in open war against his king, had been quickly beheaded—first peer and marshal of France, greatest gentleman of his age, sadly betrayed and swiftly killed by the envy of *Richelieu*. And the King, to whom hunting was as the breath of life, took Chantilly for himself.

"WHAT a king; what a cardinal!" wrote the *Sieur de Soudeilles*. "You shall have a true picture of them, such as no man has dared to set down on paper, with no pretense, no glory of ermine and scarlet to hide the sorry man beneath."

There was much talk of *Soudeilles* in and about Chantilly, for some said they had seen him riding with armed men in the forest, and the King was uneasy. *Soudeilles* had been captain of the guards



to Montmorency, a man of high deeds and great emprise; and after the Duke's execution he had retired to his estate in *Limousin* to mourn the death of the man he had loved and served.

Queer tales of *Soudeilles*: a second *Bayard*, many declared, a gentleman of the greatest honor and the keenest brain. *Richelieu* sent to offer him a captaincy in the guards of the Cardinal, but *Soudeilles* replied very gently that tears had so dimmed his eyesight as to make such service impossible. So he was forgotten by the court.

At Chantilly, where he had captained, he was not forgotten. The mere rumor that he had been seen in the forest, boded evil things. King and Cardinal alike had missed assassination closely; the King's father had been murdered, and it was most likely that any gentleman who had loved Montmorency would not hesitate to seek vengeance. As no more was heard of *Soudeilles*, however, the rumor was obliterated.

Now came *Sieur de Pontis* from the army, for the King had promised him a

"You heartily dislike me," went on Richelleu's harsh voice. "That is the truth, is it not? You distrust me?"



company in the guards. This grizzled veteran of fifty-four, a soldier since boyhood, was well liked by all, knew everyone, and enjoyed life with all the zest of a young gallant.

FRESH from the front, he told tales of the Spanish war, and being a gay fellow, was vastly entertaining with his stories of this and that. But on an afternoon when the King and Cardinal were hunting, and most of the gallants off with them, Pontis sat in the great courtyard of the chateau with two or three old soldiers, and fell to talking shop, over great stoups of wine. He had not joined in this day's hunt because of a touch of fever, but this did not interfere with his thirst by any means.

"Those German mercenaries who have joined us," he declared, "are glorious. The Duke of Weimar and his eighteen thousand men, all veterans, will give us a real army. You should see them on parade!"

"Parade, my eye," swore Batz-Castlemore, a Gascon twenty-five years in the guards, who had taken the name of Artaignan after a distant relative in the royal household. "What have they done in the field? Nothing. What will they do? Nothing. And why? No leaders, that's why. We haven't one general worth a tinker's dam."

"We had one," spoke up another of the guard officers. "The finest soldier in Europe, the best leader. But a coward betrayed him."

"You fool, shut your mouth!" Artaignan glanced around. "Never speak the truth in the royal house. Montmorency's dead. What's this I hear about the German *carabine*, Pontis? They tell me it does wonders."

"In theory, yes!" And Pontis laughed. "These guns with rifled barrels aren't new. They work well for a shot or two, but a couple of volleys finishes them."

"Why, then?" came the eager questions. "The ball has greater velocity. It has truer aim. It can outshoot an ordinary matchlock or fusil any day."

Pontis nodded and refilled his flagon.

"True enough, comrades. Two reasons against 'em. First, the rifled barrel fouls after a few discharges; your ranks must stop firing to clean. *Peste* on such a weapon! More important, the locks are damned uncertain. Those pyrites they use to strike a spark are no good. Why, at Bray a company armed with them had to drop guns and go at the Spaniards with swords!"

"Couldn't the snaphaunce lock be used?" argued somebody. "With a flint, you know."

"It might be, only the spark never hits the pan aright," said Pontis sagely.

"That's another of your fine theories that aren't worth a hang with the enemy's cavalry coming down at you. Back at Ivry under Henri Quatre—"

"You were still a babe at Ivry," broke in Artaignan with a roaring Gascon oath. "Listen: I want to ask you something, talking of flints and pans: A couple of months ago, when we were quartered at Monceau with the King, a fellow tried to get into my company. His name was Montrel, of the lesser *noblesse*; he was from somewhere in Limousin. When he finally got it into his head that only Gascons were admitted in my company, he disappeared. But he had full equipment, mind you, and a *carabine* of some kind. Not a fusil but a rifled gun. And it had some newfangled kind of lock. He swore it would never miss fire."

"A flint?" queried Pontis.

"Aye. Said his father-in-law had made it for him. And who do you think the old man turned out to be? Soudeilles, upon my honor! No other."

"Soudeilles!" Pontis frowned. "Hm! Seems to me I remember hearing some talk that he dabbled in guns. Plague take the whole thing! Give me a rapier every time, and a company of good pikemen—Ha! The King! Look alive!"

Horns were sounding, gay and triumphant. The guards sprang to their posts. Over the long causeway that ran across the moat, came a rout of horsemen—nobles and soldiers, huntsmen and guards, King and Cardinal.

Booted and spurred and erect was Richelieu, despite his gray hairs and the malady that was even now beginning to eat out his life; his hunting days were nearly ended. He moved like a gaunt wraith amid the throng that surged into the courtyard, took his leave of the King, and so disappeared into his own quarters—to universal relief. None breathed freely when that man was present.

LOUD talk, quick drinking, running of grooms, and not a little boasting, filled the air. Boar-spear in hand, the King strutted, slapped backs, talked volubly. He had done well this day, with two tuskers to his own hand.

"Ha, Pontis! You missed a great run!" he exclaimed, coming up to the veteran. "You're better? Good! You must come with us tomorrow. We've got two noble stags marked down, stags of ten or twelve, the foresters swear; we're off at early dawn. The hunt will be near the village of Rabastens."

Weakly handsome, weakly stubborn and suspicious, the King was now in royal mood, as usual after a hunt. It was the one thing that stirred his blood—more than women, more than wines, as you might tell by his effeminate air and the open secret of his vices. Louis the Just, he liked to call himself.

Effiat, the young Cinq-Mars, grand equerry, embraced him warmly; other favorites crowded around, flattering him, hanging upon him. Here was the one moment, the one time, when favors or requests might be obtained, when the capricious, uncertain and petty son of Henry of Navarre flashed with a little of his sire's spirit.

PONTIS eyed the gay, ebullient throng with a glint of contempt in his hard eye. These nobles, these butterflies of the court, went not to battle. The enemy might be fifty miles from Paris, but they fluttered about the Louvre, went about their little vices and feuds and amours, in supreme indifference, and fairly swam in honors, titles, money, estates.

"So there you are! A good ride today, comrade. Faith of a gentleman, you missed something." Tréville, of the musketeers, clapped Pontis on the shoulder with a fanfare of Gascon oaths. Then, as the throng eddied away, he twisted his mustache and shook his head anxiously.

"Devil take it, Pontis! Something will happen one of these days."

"Usually does!" And Pontis chuckled.

"No, no! I mean the King. You can't imagine it; when hunting, he's a different man entirely—his father's son, by gad! He has no sense of caution. Why, today he ran in on a boar with his spear and managed the *coup* beautifully! Damme if I'd like to tackle one of those tuskers afoot! And this afternoon he was separated from all of us for half an hour or more—we lost him entirely."

"Oh!" Pontis lifted his brows. "You mean—"

"Precisely. What a chance for anyone! For a disgruntled noble or courtier, a prince of the church, perhaps, a mere madman!"

"Eh? Guard your tongue, Tréville," Pontis said brusquely.

"Hah! You don't love Richelieu any more than I do."

"No; but I see him more clearly, perhaps. Such talk is nonsense; besides, it's devilish dangerous, Tréville. You've had a drop too much, for a fact."

"All right, all right," said the Gascon hotly. "Pontis or no Pontis, you don't call me drunk to my face unless you want a fight on your hands! And I tell you it's damned dangerous for the King to run through the forest alone. How the devil are we poor guardsmen to keep up with his fine blooded horse, eh? I'm worried."

"For God's sake, calm your tongue!" Pontis exclaimed hurriedly. "Here's M. de Chavigny, and one of the Cardinal's secretaries as well, heading for us."

Tréville swallowed hard and muttered something most disrespectful.

Chavigny was indeed approaching—a tall, handsomely dressed man, who was twitted to his face with the secret of his birth; that is to say, if a secret that was betrayed by his whole appearance could be called a secret. For he was the living image of Richelieu, as that gentleman had looked twenty years earlier.

"Gentlemen!" Chavigny halted and bowed, sending the secretary on. "Ah, Pontis; I was looking for you. His Eminence requests that you will do him the honor of waiting on him in ten minutes. If I mistake not, you are soon to be congratulated."

"Ah! You mean I'm to get a regiment?" Pontis exclaimed eagerly.

"A company of the guards, which is the same as a regiment of the line—or so I understand."

With smiling grace, Chavigny went his way. The Gascon swung around to Pontis with a grimace.

"So the kitten asks the mouse to call on the cat!" he growled. "Well, you're in for it. If the King gave you a company, you'd have it—if the Cardinal gives you one, you'll earn it. Hm! And you're no Cardinal's man, it's well known. Look out for yourself, Pontis!"

WHEN the Sieur de Pontis was ushered into the presence of the minister, ten minutes later, the grave warning was still ringing in his ears.

He found Richelieu alone, seated in a deep chair before a table, still booted and in the disorder of the hunt. The table was littered with papers, neatly piled. The prelate looked very gray and worn and old, as an old dog turns gray in the cheeks when his days wear on.

"Good afternoon, M. de Pontis," he said, rather brusquely. "I understand you are in hopes of an appointment?"

"If that be the pleasure of His Majesty," said Pontis, with a low reverence.

Then, at the look he received, he could have bitten off his tongue.

"Cannot the minister appoint, as well as the King? Or might not the favor be so well received, monsieur, from such a hand as mine? Well, well, you're a soldier; that's why I sent for you."

PONTIS comprehended that the interview had begun badly; but he was no man to stammer out apologies. He merely bowed and waited.

"You were, I think, an admirer of the late Duc de Montmorency?"

"As a soldier, Your Eminence."

"Ah! That's much better!" The eyes smiled a little, but not the face. This gray man never smiled, except when he was cajoling some point out of the King; then he could smile and weep and exhibit all the passion of Scaramouche himself. "And if I mistake not, monsieur, you were well acquainted with the Sieur de Soudailles."

"He was my friend, Your Eminence," said Pontis quietly, stoutly, and met the piercing thrust of the brilliant old eyes with calm mien.

"You are an honest man, monsieur," the other said abruptly. "I wish to tell you something, and ask your advice."

Pontis bowed, to conceal his astonishment. Some trap was coming, eh?

"Today the hunt went near the village of Rabastens," Richelieu pursued. "There we learned of two giant stags; His Majesty is going in search of them tomorrow."

"He was good enough to mention them, Your Eminence, and to request my company."

"Oh! Very well. One of my guards, however, chanced to hear a woodsman remark that several strange men—foreigners, as the natives call them—are stopping in this same village. Knowing as you do the headlong manner of His Majesty in the hunt, what would you advise?"

"Investigation, Your Eminence," Pontis replied. "And a more careful guard about the King."

"That is impossible. There remains, investigation." The brilliant eyes dwelt upon the features of Pontis for an instant. "I wish you would undertake it."

So the trap was baited, ready for springing! A touch of anger kindled in the soldier, and he yielded to the quick impulse.

"Gladly, Your Eminence. You have, undoubtedly, a reason for selecting me?"



"I received his surrender, as he lay there. If those cowards and traitors had not left him to die—"

The words were not humble. They held challenge; and Richelieu, with a slight lift of his arched brows, met the challenge.

"I have, monsieur. Three reasons, in fact. First, you are an honorable gentleman, a soldier, whose one desire is to serve the King."

At this, Pontis bowed anew.

"Second," went on the dry, harsh voice, "you heartily dislike me. Come! That is the honest truth, is it not? You distrust me?"

Pontis compressed his lips for an instant, but he, too, would not refuse challenge.

"No, Your Eminence. I may not like what you do, but I respect the cause you serve."

"Indeed! In other words, you think the man unscrupulous, but his aims excellent?"

"Precisely, Your Eminence."

And this time Pontis did not bow.

"As I thought, monsieur. You are a gentleman; you are not of my party; hence the third reason. This is, that if you must take action against possible assassins, you may be depended on to do it—and their blood will not be laid at my door. You see, I am entirely honest."

"On the contrary, monsieur, you evade," said Pontis calmly. "I accept the honor of this mission; that is understood. Will you have the kindness to tell me why I have been selected for it?"

"Because a certain Sieur de Montrel, who is the son-in-law of Sieur de Soudeilles, was seen several days ago in the forest, alone and wandering afar. And this Montrel was a near relative of the late Duc de Montmorency."

Pontis understood perfectly. Richelieu more than suspected that Soudeilles was hiding somewhere, preparing some plot to kill the King or his minister, or both.

"I shall look into this at once, Your Eminence."

"You must leave immediately, of course. Do you wish an escort?"

"A huntsman for guide, no more. I guarantee with my life that there need be no cause for worry. I shall join the hunt when it approaches that village to-morrow."

"As you like, monsieur. I shall be happy to make your excuses to the King, if he asks after you in the morning."

Pontis bowed and withdrew, in a tumult of emotions. Ten minutes later, with a huntsman who knew the forest for guide, he was mounting and on his way; the afternoon was only half gone.

HE was deeply shocked by the mere suspicion; he knew Soudeilles to be the soul of honor. And yet, who could tell? Revenge lies deep, and four years might well have changed the man. In such case, pistol and sword must remove Soudeilles. Pontis quite understood why



he had been sent. He was at liberty to use his own judgment. Whatever action he took, Richelieu would suffer no blame.

"The damned fox!" he muttered angrily. "But—Soudeilles? No, no; impossible!"

On the contrary, highly probable. Soudeilles knew this forest, these people; he could hide among them where no other might. They would protect and shelter him gladly, for they loved the very name of Montmorency.

The miles dropped behind, and the hours, and the day. The moon was up, high and white and cold on the summer sky, when the two of them rode into the village. It was a miserable place, a collection of hovels deep in the forest. The people who came running out were hideous creatures, stamped with poverty and the hard struggle for bare life. Pontis dismounted among them.

"I am Sieur de Pontis," he said, taking the bull by the horns at once. "I have come to speak with my friend M. de Soudeilles. Go and tell him that I am here."

Now, one after another swore heartily there was no such person here, as they crowded around; but none the less some one took the message. Suddenly a silence fell, and a calm voice hushed the people and sent them away, and Soudeilles came walking in the moonlight with hands extended.

"Pontis!" he cried warmly. "The same, after so many years—"

They embraced, sent the guide to rest, and walked together in the forest until Soudeilles bethought to ask how Pontis had known of his presence.

"Your daughter's husband, M. de Montrel, was seen and recognized, lurking about the forest," said Pontis. "It is thought you are here to kill the King."

"I?" Soudeilles turned and looked at him in astonishment. "I? Kill the King? Only a rogue would cherish such a thought of me."

"It was a rogue who sent me," said Pontis; and the other understood.

A quiet, merry man he had been, but was so no longer. He was clad all in black, and his grave features were lost in thought and silence. A certain sternness sat in his deep eyes, and odd serenity in his whole face and air. Here in the forest, or in a crowd, his figure would draw every eye, the force of his personality would make itself felt, even in silence.

"When M. le Duc was killed, my life was broken," he said to Pontis after a little. There was no more mention of assassination. "Others loved him also; Montrel was one of them."

"He is here, then?"

"No," said Soudeilles. "I am alone. You will remain for the night? Then share my hut, and what I have to eat. I am here on a bitter errand, my friend, yet a very honorable errand. I regret that I cannot disclose it to you."

"There is no need," Pontis said simply. "I ask no questions."

IN truth, Pontis knew not what to say. All the old charm of Soudeilles had gripped him again; the fascination of that high, loyal spirit which so impressed itself on everyone who came in contact with it.

And yet Pontis doubted a little; whatever happened, he would keep his pistols ready, his rapier at hand. For, as they talked, he saw that the mind of Soudeilles ran ever upon the dead Montmorency. The other could talk of little else, reviving old days and scenes, bringing back to life that dead hero who had been the greatest captain in France.

Pontis did not fail to observe that whenever, by chance, the name of Sieur de Montrel was mentioned, the brows of Soudeilles drew down heavily.

"What's this talk I hear about some new kind of gun you've invented?" Pontis asked suddenly, to relieve the subject. The other looked up quickly, and rose.

"That! So you've heard rumors, have you? You shall see it for yourself—a great idea, Pontis! I've worked it out very close to perfection. Put a few sticks on the fire, so we can see."

By the ruddy leaping flames, he showed Pontis a gun, whose stock was of poor wood, darkened and blackened by stains. All else was tossed away and forgotten; the two men put their noses to the glow and talked.

"And you made it yourself, you say?"

"All except the barrel; Griffon in Paris made that for me. It's an ordinary rifled barrel, you see—a *carabine*. I've made a dozen of them. Montrel has one of them with him, worse luck."

"But the lock!" exclaimed Pontis, as Soudeilles checked himself and fell into dour silence at that name. "It isn't a snaphaunce?"

"Not unlike; the lock's the thing, indeed. You know the trouble we always have with fusils? Well, I think the problem of fouling can be solved by changing the load and bullet; I haven't worked that out yet. But the main thing is the lock. You know, a flint can't be depended on at all. And pyrites crumble away."

"But this is a flint," Pontis objected. The other smiled.

"True; and note where it strikes—on the cover of the pan!" Time and again, Soudeilles cocked and pulled trigger, and the tiny sparks flew. "You see? The same old flint; but it strikes the metal at such an angle that the spark goes down into the pan, infallibly. You see?"

"I see a new era in the art of war," said Pontis slowly. His friend shrugged.

"Nonsense! One never knows. When cavalry are thundering down and pikes are out, theory amounts to little; a dozen unforeseen things may prove an invention useless. Well, enough of this. You shall see the weapon tried tomorrow, old fellow."

"You don't care to speak of why you're here?"

"No," said Soudeilles curtly.

The subject was not mentioned again.

Pontis found sleep to come hard. He was oppressed by the gloomy distraction of Soudeilles. Loyalty to the King, no matter what sort of king or man he might be, was the great flaming beacon of every French gentleman of the age; reverence of the King was the first duty, devotion to the King the first command, of honor. Could Soudeilles, this mirror of chivalry and nobility, have so long doted upon vengeance that he could forget such things?

As for Montrel, and the apparent mystery enveloping him, Pontis quite forgot it.

The morning came chill and overcast for summer, here in the depths of the far-flung forest. Pontis was up with the sun, located his huntsman guide, and gave him instructions.

"I remain here. Find in which direction the hunt lies, and come to let me know. I want to be in at the kill."

"I'll find the foresters and return, monsieur,"—and the man was off.

Pontis joined his host for the usual morning draught, and noted the affection and respect in which Soudeilles was held by these villagers.

"Well?" Soudeilles turned to him with sudden direct look and question. "We need not mince words. You had an errand here. Whither do you go?"

"To meet the King; my guide will bring me word."

A SUDDEN drum of hoofs; a horseman appeared at gallop. A stranger, a man armed with gun over shoulder-strap, who saluted Soudeilles with respect and beckoned him aside, and spoke hastily. Pontis remembered that several strangers had been reported in this village. Soudeilles, then, was not alone after all.

Presently his host came back to him, gloomily, as the horseman rode away.

"I think, my dear Pontis, that we shall perhaps ride together," he said gravely. "And in that case, I may have to tell you of my own errand here. It is a dark and a sad one, but honor leaves me no choice. Let us wait and see."

So, thought Pontis, might speak a man whose mind was made up for murder.

"You did not come alone, then?"

"No. Four of my huntsmen from home are with me; my men all."

Soudeilles got out his rifle and began to load it with care, but said nothing further about displaying its qualities. Instead, he spoke with mournful abstraction.

"It was a morning like this at Evigliana, Pontis. Monsieur le Duc led the infantry, on his big horse La Remberge. We came out of the trees, crossed a ditch, and there, slap ahead of us, was the whole army of Savoy. They opened fire on us. Ah, what a voice Montmorency had! He blared at us to follow, put spurs to La Remberge, and went at full gallop into the cavalry. He wounded and unhorsed Prince Doria; his sword was like a thunderbolt in the sunlight. The cavalry broke. He spurred through them and hurled himself into a German regiment. They took him for an apparition and fled, screaming—"

He was silent for a moment, then went on dreamily:

"At Castelnaudary it was the same. Only six of us with him when he spurred into the whole of Schomberg's army, cut his way through a squadron of cavalry, and through six ranks of infantry."

"I was there, you know," Pontis said gently. "I was there, but on the other side that day. It was I who received his surrender and stanchd the blood as he lay, with half a dozen balls in him. If those cowards and traitors had not left him to die, we would have spared him. We waited twenty minutes for some one to carry him away, pretending we didn't see him. God knows we didn't want to take him prisoner!"

"True, true," murmured Soudeilles, and drooped his chin on his breast. "Cowards and traitors—"

Suddenly came a shout, a drum of hoofbeats. Pontis leaped up, but it was not his guide; it was the man who had spoken with Soudeilles, and who now came to his master with low swift words. Soudeilles turned.

"Come, Pontis! If you want to meet the King, come with us!"

MOUNTING, they spurred away at a mad pace; Pontis had no choice, for stay with Soudeilles he must. But, since Soudeilles carried his gun across saddle, Pontis alertly yet sadly kept hand close to pistol as he rode.

Now it shall prove how fearfully wrong was the *Sieur de Pontis* in his whole conception of this matter, as he admitted in his own crabbed soldier's hand. . . .

The King, on this early morning run, spurred so hard and fast that ere long the entire rout of nobles and soldiers and gentlemen was trailed out through the forest. Two men alone kept pace with him and these two were foresters of Chantilly, mounted on barbs of glorious strain, so that Louis was moved to wonder that two foresters should be so well horsed.

The stag and hounds were faster still, but with his two men the King spurred on and on, until suspicion seized him that they had lost the quarry. Now he trusted to the two foresters, and these led on with such confidence that he had no doubts of them. Until, of a sudden, the white-lathered horses labored into a narrow open glade amid the thick trees, and the two foresters drew rein, and the King also.

For, in this glade, waited a man who sat with gun across saddle. It was the *Sieur de Montrel*, a dark and passionate young man. The two foresters greeted him with a shout, then took their places beside him, and the King, facing them, knew that he had been led into a trap.

"Greeting, sire," said Montrel, and gave his name.

"Well, monsieur?" the King asked calmly enough.

"You have one moment to commend your soul to God," said Montrel, and lifted his gun. "Remember Montmorency, sire! You sent him to the scaffold. He was my relative, the noblest man alive."

"Ah!" said the King. "He would be very proud of your present occupation, monsieur. Foresters! I order you to seize this gentleman."

The two men did not move. Montrel laughed wildly.

"They also loved Montmorency, sire."

The King perceived that there was no escape. He held only a light hunting spear for weapon. But, at this moment, there was a stir of movement among the trees.

"Ah, Montrel, Montrel!" said a voice. "I warned you. —Fire!"

Smoke spouted from the forest girth; the ragged reports of three guns boomed forth. The two foresters fell; the horse of one leaped and went off, dragging the man by the stirrup. Montrel reeled in the saddle, then recovered. A fourth shot sounded. At this, Montrel dropped his weapon and pitched forward, shot through the heart.

The King reined in his startled horse, saw *Sieur de Pontis* spurring forward, followed by other men, and knew that he was safe. He dismounted. Pontis, in deep agitation, flung himself to the earth and kissed the hand of the King.

"In time, in time, sire!" he exclaimed. "Here—it is this gentleman who has saved you. Allow me to present him."

HE needs no presentation," said Louis, and extended his hand to Soudeilles, who dropped on his knee and kissed it. "I remember *Sieur de Soudeilles* very well indeed; I regret that he has retired from court. Well, monsieur, will you have the kindness to explain this astonishing scene? I seem to remember that M. de Montrel is your son-in-law."

"So he was, sire," said Soudeilles, rising. "Unhappily, he has for some time entertained the fixed idea that he was called upon to act the part of an assassin. I warned him, in vain. Learning something of his plans, I came with my own men, endeavoring to check him. This was impossible. I watched him, and—this was the result."

"Good God!" exclaimed the King,

staring. "There were four guns discharged! Then it was you who—"

"Who killed him. Yes, it was I," said Soudeilles quietly. "There was no other course. May I request one favor of Your Majesty?"

"You may request anything, my dear monsieur; you deserve anything in my power."

"Then, sire, let this matter not be made public. It is a stain upon my honor, a disgrace to my family. If you will consent to let it be buried in silence, I shall be indeed grateful."

THE King looked sharply at Pontis. "You hear, monsieur? It becomes a command; what has happened this morning, has never happened. You have my word, M. de Soudeilles. But how is it that you and your three men were able to do this thing? Look at the trees yonder. They are out of ordinary gunshot, if I'm any judge."

"It was the *carabine*, sire," broke out Pontis eagerly. "The weapon which M. de Soudeilles himself has invented."

Instantly, Louis became animated, and with quick interest demanded details of the gun. Soudeilles explained them. The King took the weapon from his hand, examined it, uttered brisk approval.

"Upon my word, monsieur, this is marvelous! I must have this weapon from you; I shall arm my bodyguard with it. And not one of your four guns missed fire—most remarkable! I shall keep this gun."

"May I beg Your Majesty to let me substitute another for that one?" said Soudeilles quickly, a trace of agitation in his manner.

"Eh? If you like. But why, monsieur? And what is this peculiar stain on the stock of this weapon?"

Soudeilles turned pale as death. His eyes met those of the King, and in their depths was something grim and terrible.

"Sire, I myself carved that gun-stock from a plank of wood. This plank came from a scaffold; it had been deluged with the blood of the Duc de Montmorency, whom I loved."

For a long moment the eyes of the two men were gripped. Here lay confession, challenge, comprehension. In those words was revealed how Soudeilles himself had once cherished vengeance; none need ask why he had carved that gun-stock.

Louis looked down at it, then handed it back to its owner. His gaze dwelt upon Soudeilles for a moment longer, with distaste, with cold repugnance, almost with fear. Then he turned away.

"M. de Pontis, will you be good enough to bring one of those weapons?" he said. "We must rejoin the hunt."

He mounted and rode off, without another word, and Pontis followed. . . .

That night, in Chantilly, Sieur de Pontis stood before the Cardinal, alone. Richelieu had heard the story from the King's lips, and eyed Pontis with his usual calm appraisal.

"So the honor of Soudeilles is to remain unsmirched," he said with a certain irony. "Well, M. de Pontis, you accomplished your mission admirably. I understand that the King is very eager to have more of these weapons made. I am sorry that I cannot place you in charge of the work."

Pontis bowed. "Your Eminence does me too much honor."

"Not at all, monsieur. It seems that the King has been pleased to give you your company of the guards, and therefore I cannot interfere. A most remarkable story, all of this, monsieur; strange things lie in it. How Montmorency was loved by all who knew him! Yet he served his country ill. And other men, who strive to serve their country well, seem destined to be hated by all who know them—"

Richelieu checked himself, his gaze fastened upon space. And this man, who seldom or never smiled, seemed to see some vision as he looked into nothing; so that his lips twisted, and for an instant there came to his gray countenance the shadow of a bitter, bitter smile that held no mirth.

Then the mood was gone, and Pontis took his leave.

SUCH was the story that came to me with the old gun and the mass of documents from afar. I looked at the rifle again, put out my hand and touched the queer split and stained pine stock. And with the touch, I seemed to see again the eyes of Sieur de Soudeilles, looking into the eyes of Louis the King with grave, unflinching confession and honesty and high nobility.

The blood of Montmorency—was it true, then? Here was the gun to bear witness.

Another exceptionally interesting story in this brilliant series will be a feature of the forthcoming September issue.



KIOGA of the

Illustrated by Jerry Cannon

The Story Thus Far:

ON a great-hearted errand as medical missionary to the primitive people of the far Northwest coast, Dr. Lincoln Rand set sail aboard the schooner *Cherokee*. With him went his young wife Helena and his educated Indian friend Mokuyi.

Blown far out of her course by North Pacific gales, through the Bering Sea and into the unknown Arctic north of Siberia, the *Cherokee* was wrecked upon a wild and reef-girt coast—the shore, it proved, of the great hitherto unknown land of Nato'wa: a region warmed by uncharted ocean currents and by great volcanic fissures and hot springs; a land thickly wooded with evergreens of the sequoia family, and supporting many and varied wild animals. Stranger still was its human population: a people so like the American Indians that Dr. Rand soon came to the conclusion that here was the original birthplace of the Indian race.

Not long after the arrival of the castaways, the son of Lincoln Rand and Helena was born; but only a few weeks later the child's parents were both killed in a raid by hostile natives upon the Shoni tribe who had given them shelter. Thereupon the child was adopted by Mokuyi and cared for by his wife Awena.

In this primitive life Kioga, or the

Snow Hawk, as he was named, grew to a splendid manhood. From Mokuyi, and from books salvaged from another ship wrecked upon the coast, he learned to speak and write English; and from his wild comrades he acquired a wealth of forest lore. When Mokuyi was murdered by a Shoni secret society, Kioga avenged his death implacably. And his prowess in war and hunting at length made him war-chief of the tribe. When, however, another party of white people were wrecked upon the reefs of Nato'wa, foolishly fired upon the natives and were about to be put to death, Kioga rescued them. And for that he was exiled from his adopted people.

Longing to see the country of his fathers, Kioga aided this castaway yachting party—Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and her suitor Allan Kendle—to build a boat and escape. On the southward journey, Kendle grew suspicious of Beth's growing interest in Kioga, and contrived to have him left marooned on the ice when a whaler picked up the rest of the party.

The Snow Hawk survived, however, and made his way to San Francisco. But civilization proved too much for Kioga. Disgusted by its many hypocrisies and believing his love rejected by Beth, he set out overland through Canada and

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WILDERNESS

By WILLIAM L. CHESTER

Alaska to make his way back to Nato'wa. And on the way he gathered a group of American Indians—people homesick for the free and simple life before the white man came—to take back with him to the land of their forefathers.

And at last they reached Nato'wa. But while Kioga was absent on a hunt for fresh meat, they were attacked by a Shoni war-party and either killed or made captive. . . . Kioga followed their trail to the village of the Shoni; then in disguise he boldly entered the town, determined to rescue his friends. In this he succeeded; but later he was himself captured and put to the torture. At the last moment an attack by a hostile war-party diverted attention from him, and he escaped—to wander alone and blinded in the forest.

A search-party of warriors from the few still friendly to the former young war-chieftain, headed by Kioga's "blood-brother" Kias and accompanied by little Tokala—whose boyish idol Kioga was—set forth to rescue the wounded man, but found what seemed certain evidence of his death at the jaws of a wolf-pack.

Meanwhile, Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and their friend the scientist Dr. Munro chartered the schooner *Narwhal* and sailed from San Francisco to overtake him.

But far to the north of Bering Sea the *Narwhal* was frozen in, and the party wintered on the ice, cheered by a chance meeting with some Eskimo who had met Kioga on his way northward: they were on the right track!

With the spring break-up of the ice they sailed northward again, accompanied by guests they did not like—a group of castaway seal-poachers whom they had rescued. And sure enough when at last they reached Nato'wa, these renegade whites deserted, after stealing weapons.

Following Kioga's map of the region, Dr. Munro found a safe berth for the ship and then with Beth, Dan and the cook Flashpan made his way to the village of the Shoni. Aided by his knowledge of Indian dialects, skill as a magician, and by his store of trade gifts, Munro made friends with the Shoni; but only after some days did he venture to inquire of Kioga's friend Kias for news of him. Learning of the dreadful fate that had befallen the Snow Hawk, Munro—disbelieving the evidence of the young man's death—planned with Kias for an expedition to attempt his rescue. (*The story continues in detail:*)

ON the next day Kias came again as agreed and plans were laid for the search for Kioga. But one other thing



required doing. Questioning the Indian further, Munro found that Kias recalled his white friends of two decades past. But as to their place of burial he could tell Munro nothing; nor would the scientist ever likely learn. Long since, the wall logs which had been blazed to mark

the spot had been replaced with new. And none could tell where Mokuyi, Indian companion of those first white visitors to Nato'wa, lay at rest.

But near the coast, back in a wood which had rooted close to the sea, Munro later came upon the decaying framework of a half-finished little ship. On its bow, weathered dull, a name-plate still clung. It bore the single word "*Cherokee*"—and a dead hand had added the Roman numeral *II*.

This was the vessel, its completion interrupted by massacre, in which Lincoln Rand the first had hoped one day to make his way back to civilization with an account of his strange discoveries in Nato'wa. But like its builder, *Cherokee II* was a thing of the dead past. As Munro removed the name-plate the entire structure collapsed upon itself.

Unable, then, to erect a suitable monument over the graves of his long-mourned friends, Munro instead cut their names and an inscription of their discovery on the face of a cliff. This cliff overlooks what the scientist named Rand Bay, and is the first thing the eye falls upon when entering the little cove.

Standing awhile with bared head beside this tribute to two men he had respected and one woman he had loved, Munro finally turned from the things of memory back to the grim realities existing all around him. . . .

The prophecy of Kias proved truth. What with the prestige Munro had gained, he was more than welcome in the long-boats of his Indian hosts, coursing up and down the river highways. On a great slab of rolled birch-bark he began to map what parts of the area he visited. Rand Bay was the first name writ thereon. The forested mountains through which the Indians paddled were called the Buffalo Back Range, and are so marked on the chart he lettered. Thus was begun the great culminating scientific work of this illustrious scholar.

But for all his inquiries, there was none could tell him even vaguely the area of this new land. As large almost as a continent it might indeed be, and still fall within the blank spaces on the Arctic map. A veritable geographical fortress was Nato'wa, inestimably rich in natural resources, yet incapable of being carried by storm—a land and a people which might endure as long as time, when other nations had destroyed one another.

Into the Tsus-gina-i none would go save those of Kias' band. One morning,

accompanied by Beth, Dan and Heladi, the search-party set out upon the canoe-voyage into the forbidden territory. It was slow laborious toil against the currents, swollen by the season's thaw since Heladi had come this way. Many days found them still struggling for their goal. But their labors, at least for the white people aboard, were rewarded by the wonders in the changing panorama. The swift streams they followed broke off into the wildest tumbling rapids, and milk-white cascades of inspiring beauty.

In the valleys the timber grew to the very edge of the water, overhanging everywhere beyond the banks of the rivers. Mighty forest trees sprang majestic upward from the eternal green twilight about their colossal bases, to sway their lofty capitals in the sun. Between their solid columns the ribbon of the river ran in deep religious silence, the canoes but black shapes in purple shadows, laden with men and women in colorful costume.

THE Indians of Kias' band scarce dared speak aloud this morning as they dipped their silent paddles in a river of sepia and moved into the growing dawn. Slow sunrise came to crown the rain-wet trees with haloes of flame. Then down the fluted trunks the sun's light moved, lighting the cinnamon boles slowly until they glowed like red-hot ingots heating toward incandescence in a smelting furnace. Never had Numidian marble richer colorings than these heroic stems, which seemed to support the very sky upon their tremendous columns.

And far below, gazing up at them, a handful of ephemeral beings called men. All of their little earthly spans together would not equal the early childhood of one such tree.

Their crowns gilded by the suns of seven thousand years; springs bubbling from their roots to slake the thirst of tiger and elk and panther—such are the wonderful forests of the primitive Tsusgina-i, on countless miles of which James Munro gazed. Little wonder the Indians thought the souls of the departed lingered here!

So they paddled onward, the sound of running waters ever in their ears. And on their way it was Munro's good fortune to look upon a waterfall known only to the Indians as Tominga, the Enchanted Cataract. As a traveler in many lands Munro had seen them all. But not Niagara, nor Tequandema, Roraima, Iguaçu—nor Victoria nor Kalambo—no



one of these compares with Tominga, the greatest known waterfall on this rolling globe. All of one entire day Munro observed it, wondrous yet appalling in its unspeakable voice and power.

Born of earth-heat and an unknown glacier, the vivid waters of Tominga drop full two thousand feet over red and yellow granite cliffs, themselves having a

breadth of near two miles, into a chasm which is the cataract's only outlet. Its roar may be heard for twenty leagues. Its volume is the source of thirteen rivers, of which the Hiwasi is but one. The motion-picture photographs taken by James Munro indicate a fall of almost inconceivable magnitude.

Thereafter fierce rapids forced a dozen portages upon them; but at length the tremendous rumble of Tominga died behind them, and they came at last to the point where Heladi had earlier seen the Snow Hawk. Here, with his skilled trackers, Kias set out to locate Kioga's old trail. A day of unavailing labor followed. Exhausted by the labor of search in such impenetrable wilderness, the Indians—all but two—returned at sundown to the party's bivouac.

At midnight the last of the band, save one, returned with a curious report: Of the Snow Hawk's trail he had seen nothing. But at the end of day, attracted by a peculiar metallic sound, he had turned into the forest and found a strange object, which he now tossed before the others. It was a rawhide cord, from either end of which bits of metal hung, and struck against each other.

"What could it be?" wondered Beth, examining it intently. At that moment Kias chanced to glance up and meet Munro's gaze. The same thought had entered the mind of each. But at the girl's question, both remained silent.

"We ought to know tomorrow," said Dan, himself as mystified as Beth.

NEXT day, proceeding to the place where the object had been found, the Indians examined the ground roundabout. Then one of the braves hissed for silence; and in the hush that ensued a delicate tinkle was faintly audible to every listening ear.

Moving toward the sound, they found another cord, with metal bits attached. Then again another sound and a forward march, and so for several hours, following the metal indicators one by one, just as Kioga had done in guiding himself from place to place.

The band soon came upon the body of their missing companion, roughly covered by forest mold, sticks and branches. Near by, the tracks of a huge snow-leopard told a grim tale; and a portion of their unlucky companion had been eaten. Placing the remains on a scaffold, they continued on, at another time to return and bring the body home to Hopeka; for

to linger now would have been to invite the same danger that had laid Metumpa low.

They had not gone far in the green silence when suddenly the underbrush close by was sharply agitated. Kias, in the lead, dropped in his tracks coincidentally with a twanging note, as of a bow discharged. The others leaped behind cover, arrows at their strings, alert for expected ambush by him who had driven the shaft which skewered Kias' thigh between knee and hip. They waited tense a moment, then let fly arrows at the spot whence the shaft had sprung.

WHILE the others covered them, two went forward to scout the thicket from the flanks, intending to kill whoever lay there in ambush. Munro, meanwhile, attended Kias, breaking the arrow and drawing the ends from the wound. For the stalwart red man, such a hurt was a thing to laugh at. Kias explained that he had willfully dropped in anticipation of another arrow, not from the shock of the first arrow's impact, which little more than cut the skin.

Summoned by the others, Kias and Munro went to the thicket, into which the Indians were staring. No body lay there, riddled by their arrows. Their shafts had merely struck into near-by trees, whence they now protruded. But fixed to a rigid base was a sprung bow whose slip-trigger and trip-cord told its story of adjustment by a cunning hand. The touch of Kias' foot had sprung the bolt.

Dan's brows were knit in puzzlement. "Those copper signalers—and now an automatic bow," he muttered thoughtfully. "Damned queer. I wonder—" But with that he paused, eyes narrowing.

"We'd best go slow," said Munro quietly. "The next arrow might do a better job."

Well for them that they did go more slowly. Twice in the ensuing hour Kias detected and sprung an automatic bow; and once another, undetected, whipped its whispering death across their path. A little chill crept over Beth along with the unpleasant thought that at any moment one of them might fall pierced by a concealed arrow.

Before noon they came upon the Snow Hawk's traps and snares, some dangling empty, others weighted with game on which the ravens perched, devouring. And that night the absent hand struck among them once again. This time it

was Mengawa, the Tugari. One moment the party saw him on the trail ahead. The next he had vanished with a startled yell, as if swallowed by the earth. Rushing up, they found him lying stunned at the bottom of a deep pit, which had been skillfully covered over with a lattice-work of forest trash. Mengawa was easily revived. Not so the failing courage of the superstitious warriors.

"We tread upon a spirit's hunting-ground," said Mengawa, glancing about him uneasily.

"Twice the *wendigo* has warned us. Metumpka lies dead; Kias had his blood drawn. Mengawa fell into a trap. It is time to listen to the warnings of the spirit."

Grunts of agreement came from the other braves. Thus, for all Munro's cajoling and persuasion, to superstition bowed savages who would have laughed at odds of ten to one in open battle.

Of all the red men, only Kias would go farther.

Reduced to five, the little party continued on, the tall savage leading, Munro coming after him, then Beth and Heladi, with Dan bringing up the rear. Luckily, the trail was warming now, for exhaustion was coming upon the white girl.

IT was Kias who found a fresher print close beneath a towering cliff and traced it to a ledge running up its face. Following the narrow path, he came at last to the well-hidden door which, yawning wide, betrayed Kioga's cave. A signal brought the others climbing slowly up.

With quickening heart Beth recognized the place, the ledge, the ponderous open door. A moment, waiting and calling the name of Kioga, before Kias entered, the others at his heels, fearful of finding nothing, more fearful still of that which might be found.

Embers still glowed when Kias blew on them, and in a moment a flame lighted up the interior. For the first time Kias, Heladi, Dan and Munro looked upon the hidden eyrie which had sheltered the Snow Hawk during all his amazing boyhood, and also in the latter days of his cruel affliction.

But Beth looked on this familiar scene with tightening throat. In this picturesque retreat her first regard for Kioga had begun, to grow, later, into the love which had sustained her through all these arduous hours, when even the men had approached complete exhaustion. How empty the cave seemed without that su-

perb figure seated before the blaze, as he had sat long months ago when he brought her here to inviolable shelter!

As the talk of the others came to her ears, she began to observe the peculiar things they commented on—the sawn-off tool handles, the lack of food, the depleted store of books and weapons, the objects scattered in jarring carelessness upon the floor. The open door indicated sudden departure, and that not long ago, judging by the heat of the embers on their arrival. But all were too far gone in weariness to follow on at once.

PONDERING the riddle that Heladi could have answered, they all spent the night in Kioga's cave. When morning came, Kias again took up the search, quartering the ground like a bloodhound on a trail, and running it finally to earth and through the wilds again. Soon upon the mountain top they found Kioga's pile of offerings, books, bows, the very cream of his possessions. For what, Beth wondered, had he made such sacrifices? And Dan, watching her pityingly, wondered how long it would be before she guessed what he had only lately realized.

Following the freshening traces across stream and beach, then upward toward still greater heights, they came to where Kioga had left his footprints in the snowy banks, so clearly that even Beth could make out the traces. And then—trail's end! The earth gouged out by landslide, its swath plain-marked to the edge of a cliff below. From where they stood they could see down—far down—to where a hill of rubble lay, with mighty trees protruding from it like matchsticks from a pile of sweepings.

For an instant Beth did not grasp what to all the rest was crystal-clear. Then suddenly her eyes flashed up to Dan, at whose grim expression her face drained white. Munro was pale too, and so was Kias under his Indian mask. From Kias, Beth's eyes came to Heladi's, burning like coals, then fel' away again trying to thrust aside the truth.

A little cry, struggling for life in the white girl's throat, stopped at her quivering lips. For in that moment she realized that not only she was suffering. Rigid and stricken, Heladi stood beside her, sharing Beth's own realization that from this last track Kioga had stepped into the path of annihilation. Strong as only an Indian woman is in time of heart-break, the girl's eyes alone betrayed the pain that filled her.

Looking back again to the fearful scars left by the landslide, a single question escaped Beth, voicing all her protest against this tragic happening:

"He walked—right into it. Oh, Dan—couldn't he see?" And then she paused.

Almost with the words, sudden realization came, and with it all that hitherto had been a mystery was clarified.

"That's just it," her brother was answering softly. "He couldn't, Beth."

"Perhaps it's best—this way," Beth managed at last haltingly. "Better than to go on—blind and all alone. It must have been—quick."

But there imagination broke her. Vivid and terrible the image was before her of the Snow Hawk walking here. One moment in all the flush of his splendid strength, and the next—cut down like a mighty tree and hurled into this dread abyss.

These tearless men before her, iron-grim as men oft are when least they wish to be, could say nothing to assuage her grief. There was only one who knew Beth's heart in that moment. Distrust and fear and animosity were gone between these two. It was Heladi's slim arm, strong as steel for all its slimness, that sustained the exhausted white girl on their slow dejected return to the cave, and Heladi who soothed her through the long and restless night.

Returning to the scene of the slide, Dan and Munro searched vainly for some trace of Kioga. They found no remains save of a few dead animal creatures, on whom the ravens were performing their dreadful office. They turned again to Kioga's cave, low in spirits. . . .

When it came time to quit the cave, Beth begged leave to remain awhile alone. And in silence broken only by the crackle of the dying fire, she knelt a moment, touching the things that belonged to the Snow Hawk. From among them she selected a copper ornament bearing the marks of his tools, and hid it in her dress. Then from her finger she drew her only jewel, a ring given her by her father years ago, and placed this beside her hand. On a strange impulse she then wrote with the stub end of a pencil upon a piece of clean white birch-bark peeled from a log near the fireplace. Her note began without salutation and read thus:

I came all the way from America, with Dan and James Munro, to tell you what I should have said before, had you not

left us so suddenly. Since fate willed I should never see you again alive, I take this means of telling you, instead. I have loved you from the first, and will to the end. I leave this note and this ring. Though you will never read the one nor wear the other, it will always comfort me to know that you would find them here if you could only return.

She ended the letter with her signature. Rolling the bark into a thin cylinder, she thrust this through the ring and placed both atop the Snow Hawk's bookshelf. A few little things—a handful of arrow-heads, a boy's knife and a whittled top—caught her eye and stabbed at her heart. For these too had belonged to Kioga the lad. Pain seemed to be choking her. Wheeling, she hastily followed the others down the trail, which she saw but dimly through a blur of unshed tears.

THE return to Hopeka was accomplished in a tenth the time it had taken to fight a way up the swollen streams. And no villager who saw, but remarked upon the great change in the white girl, who smiled no more; and in Heladi, whose heart was on the ground.

"Shore!" exclaimed Flashpan fiercely when he heard the news. "Shore, Miss Beth, that's too bad. Hit shore is—" and gave up trying to say more.

But there was one, bright-eyed and expectant, whose childish queries for news of Kioga were not easily answered. It fell to Heladi to tell him.

"We sought him a long way, Tokala."

"And he is coming back?" demanded the eager boy, searching Heladi's face for the happiness that was not there.

"The tomahawk is sheathed," she told him finally.

A grimace of perplexity wrinkled Tokala's cheeks. "You did not find him?" he asked, puzzled by her strange words.

"The hunting-bow is laid aside," came the Indian girl's voice, her eyes still evading his. Slowly the Fox drew back, his smile vanishing as half-understanding came. He spoke this time in another tone. "Heladi! He—" The unbelieving rise of his inflection was like an arrow in her breast. Slowly, then, she looked at him, and answered: "Yes."

Tokala the Fox sucked in one great deep breath, exhaled it jerkily. Then he wheeled, very quickly, and began to walk away, but stumbling as he went, might have fallen only for a strong hand that caught him. A moment later a great



Near Kioga a great king-vulture settled; others came soaring in until nearly a hundred perched near by. Well the Snow Hawk knew his danger: All that held them back was the illusion of his open eyes. Did he but move, they would be upon him.

scientist did not disdain holding a small Indian lad's head against his hunting-coat, that none might see how hard he was taking these tidings.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SUN RISES

WHEN Kioga asked succor of his gods, they had not answered him. But when, rushing to destruction on the savage landslide, he faced his end without fear, they took pity. Or else it was the merest chance, and not the special providence which watches over the helpless, which saved the Snow Hawk.

For within twenty feet of the lip of the gorge he was snatched into the snowy backlash close beside the main body of the slide. Hurling into a spur of solid rock, he jarred to a smashing stop against its base, and crushed down by the mass of cold earthy stuff, the discard of the landslide, lay buried awhile as one dead.

He returned to consciousness of the fact that his entire body was one vast ache, multiplied by a dozen pressures where branch and stone weighed down on him. He lay twisted and bent almost double.

Close by, a huge thing roared and heaved about, and the strong acrid odor of a bear filled Kioga's nostrils. Trapped like himself, the animal exerted all its powers to reach the light dimly showing through the interstices of its prison.

Unhappily the digging claws flung back the displaced materials into Kioga's face, speedily accomplishing what the landslide had failed to finish. Seeking to prevent being thus buried alive, Kioga found himself able to move, a thing surprising in itself. And by laying grip upon a root near his hand, he contrived to loosen the earth's hold on his shoulders and draw himself into a semi-recumbent position. Then before the rubble could settle upon him again, a prodigious effort freed his legs.

Well above, his fellow-prisoner was laboring to good advantage, slowly boring upward from the mass, and leaving behind a space into which Kioga presently crawled. Writhing and twisting ever upward, he soon found the air coming clearer. Pausing to fill his aching lungs, he redoubled his efforts when the rubble began to settle around his knees. Blood from the injured bear rendered his hand-holds slippery. But now he could hear the mighty animal shaking itself on the

surface. Then, coughing, it shuffled off to a distance.

Ten minutes later, Kioga himself crawled exhausted from his living tomb, to rest where the sun was on his face. Thus for a time, recovering a modicum of strength; then sounds of rending and tearing came to his ears.

The wilderness undertakers were at work round about him, their cawing and muttering a thing of horror. The shadow of great black pinions sailed back and forth across his face. The victims of landslide do not long lie unattended. What the ravens and vultures leave the crows flock down on; the foxes share the feast; and ultimately the bone-crackers come—those gaunt carrion-wolves which ghost about wherever flesh is to be found.

What the vulture-kind light on need not be carrion. Life may not be extinct before their work begins. But helplessness—that must be patent, and well they know how to judge it!

So now, with Kioga, near whom a great king-vulture settled, its great beak pointing gouge-like toward his eyes. Two more then came, eying the lone figure with knowing gaze, and others of their kind came soaring in until nearly a hundred perched near, waiting the first one's move.

Well the Snow Hawk knew his danger. Ears—but mostly nostrils—told him that. Movement alone would not drive them off. All that held them back now was the illusion of his open eyes, as it were watching them. Did he but move, they would be upon him, the first lightning jabs straight into the muscles at the snail of the back, below which lies the kidney fat—then a few quick rips to lay bare the spine with its creamy vital marrow. Thereafter—but there is no thereafter when those knowing probes once begin their grisly work.

SO Kioga stirred not, save that his fingers slowly closed about a loose thick branch below his hand. Listening for the informative drag of tail-feathers when the leading vulture should bend above him, he waited, readying. All was silent round about him now. But those eyes, fully two hundred, red and angry, watched him. He heard the sickening sound when the leader waddled up to closer range. Down came the bald hideous head, its spade divided for the deadly stabbing pluck.

And midway, with force enough to crush a leopard, Kioga's club flew up to

meet it, smashing the vulture back among its fellows, carrion like the things it had grown upon. Leaping up, Kioga next flailed about among those nearest, knocking a score from their scaly legs and clearing a larger circle. Then he hurled whatever came to hand, stones, limbs and clods of snow, blindly but to good effect, and shouted at them: "Be-gone, H'ka! Away! *Hai-yah! Hai!*"

The meat-birds were confounded. Slow to rise in their heavy take-off, the exodus was soon begun. The funeral squadrons settled lower down, near the cliff, and a mighty protesting chorus echoed along the landslide from the beaks of a thousand lesser crows and ravens, cursing at the disturbance.

A GAIN with the aid of a stout staff, painfully and slowly Kioga picked his way down the strange mountain-side. His headless fever of an hour ago was gone, and he was the Indian stoic again, neither courting nor evading his end, which he felt must be near, but merely accepting what was thrust upon him, enduring the pain of his hurts in silence.

But when the acrid smell of a sulphur pool reached him, he paused to find it and lie for several hours in the hot curative waters. Out again to dry off in the mild spring breeze, then off to wander anew without aim—but not without direction. Even at darkest midnight he knew when he moved from east to west by the evidence of the tree foliage, which always freshens earliest on the slopes, where the returning sun first strikes it.

When his staff indicated a break in the trail and no bottom could be felt, another expedient served him: He dropped a pebble, listening for its fall; it struck instantly, and therefore another ledge was just below and it was safe to lower himself. A mile farther along he came to another break in the path. Another dropped pebble. This time he heard nothing, and turned back, knowing that a precipice yawned before him. And so until daylight, guided by the direction of streamlets, the echoes of his whistle from cliff to crag, and finally at dawn the feel of the sun on his left side.

In a grotto formed between two great rocks he slept, to wake ravenously hungry. And when he came to the path of another recent landslide, he roved its edges in search of newly killed animals carried down from the upper heights.

Soon he found fresh deer-meat which a wolverine had musked down for future

use. No other animal in the wilderness would touch such rank fare. Yet Kioga fed off the wolverine's kill, and stayed to exhaust the remainder before moving down toward the denser valley forests.

At the bases of fallen trees he poked around with his staff, unearthing the nut-caches of local squirrels, devouring again.

He who had once scorned all but the choicest loin-cuts of fresh-killed meat, devouring the leavings of carrion-eaters! Robbing squirrel hoards, grubbing for edible roots and bulbs, eating bark, weeds, grass—whatever, in short, his nostrils led him to! Even those squeaking creatures he once had thrown aside when Yanu tossed them into his boyish lap were welcome now, in the pressure of need to satisfy the cravings of appetite. Haunting deadfalls and snowslides, vulturelike, for what might be found to gobble down—to this had the proud Snow Hawk descended—from foremost hunter of a hunting people, to the level of the foulest feeders in all the wilderness!

But the worst was not yet. One day when the pickings had been slimmer than usual, Kioga came upon something seemingly dead and reached hungrily forward to tear away his own preëmpted share. But of a sudden a sickening revulsion swept over him. For what he had seized savagely upon and hastily flung away was circled by a leathern wristlet, the bowstring-guard of an Indian warrior. As he would have moved away, he was checked by a human voice, speaking from depths of misery.

"Who touched me?" it questioned in dull tones.

"I," answered the startled Snow Hawk. "Who speaks?"

"I am called Black Shield by my people, the Wa-Kanek."

"How comes it then that you speak the Shoni tongue?"

"I have lived a captive among them for many winters," came the voice again, hoarsely. "My heart hungered for a sight of the scenes of my boyhood. I was escaping to the plainsmen, my people."

R E A C H I N G forward, toward the voice: "Let me uncover you of stones," said Kioga.

"Touch me not!" said the other sharply. "Every bone in my body is broken, and my eyes have been blinded. Can you not see?"

"I too am blind," said Kioga quietly.

The other sighed. "I give you pity. How came this to be?"



Thereupon Kioga, happy to hear the voice of a fellow-being again, told him how he had survived the winter through.

"This is most wonderful," said the other after a pause. "By what name are you known?" When Kioga told him, the dying warrior gasped painfully. "The Snow Hawk, war-chief of the Shoni tribes! What shall you do?"

"I shall soon come to the end of a path."

While the other thought on that. Then: "At my waist—my knife—I have no more need of it. Take it!" To humor him, Kioga did so. "Now promise me one thing," said the other.

"What is that?" said Kioga.

"Where I am going, if this may be, I will speak on your behalf before the Great Ones. If they give back your eyes, promise me that you will carry this knife back to my mother."

"With these hands, if my sight is returned," said Kioga solemnly, "I will place it at her feet."

"All my boyhood life—I had been called coward," whispered the other in a voice noticeably weaker. "I feared other men, and horses, and the darkness. Men laughed at me. But now, at the end, though I am crushed and going to die—I am of strong heart. Tell her—that."

"The Black Shield is a brave man," said Kioga with conviction. "How shall I know his mother?"

"Her name is—" Kioga bent to catch the failing words. But that was all. The young Wa-Kanek was dead.

After burying Black Shield as best he could, the Snow Hawk took up the knife and turned away, unable thenceforward to bring himself to touch unknown flesh of any kind. . . .

Nightfall after this strange experience found him wandering among the lower forest tangles, searching for a place to

spend the night. In his descent, forgetful for one moment, he trod on empty air.

Even as instinct warned him of a misstep, the lightning contractions of his tiger-muscles hurled him across a bottomless crevice. Blindly he caught at the nearest hand-hold on the rocky wall to which he had bounded. He chanced to catch a protruding root of a cliff-hugging tree, and hung there swaying. And as he swayed, there came to his nostrils warning of another's nearness. Maintaining his grip on the root, he found a toe-hold lower down, and slipped to a mossy ledge. Cautiously he felt about. To one side was empty space. At his back was solid rock, and up-wind—a waiting puma.

He heard the click of its teeth as the jaws snapped shut, pictured it in his mind as it lay crouching there. The bulge of muscle on the massive forearm, cruel curved claws flexing in and out of their sheaths, polished fangs gleaming with hunger-drip. He could feel the round fiery moons of its eyes fastened on his, and sense the liquid quiver of a myriad muscles as the strong haunches edged up to power the killing spring.

As well this way as another, if die he must, thought Kioga. Braced to take the charge, he waited. . . . Came the sound of air hissing on something soft as a great long body sprang to full stretch, the padding thud of forepaws; and then—

And then an immense purring creature crushing against his thighs, its flat silken sides sleeking against him. At his hand gaping jaws that seized but did not bite. A huge long agile cylinder of furry tail clubbing against him. Only after another moment did Kioga recognize this ally of a better day.

"Mika!" he muttered. "The gods have sent you!"

AS he roughed the huge soft head, Kioga's thoughts were in the past. A youth, lithe and muscular as the panther at his side, coursed the forest depths on the trail of a great stag. Together, acting in perfect concert, beast and man laid the quarry low in an open clearing by the light of a yellow moon. He had been that youth, and this his wild companion, unchanged today save that now Mika had grown to be bodied like an Indian lion, heavier and stronger by far than when Kioga had seen him last.

If beasts have tongue, Kioga must have spoken to Mika in that soothing purring tone. Some understanding surely

passed by thought-transference or otherwise, for the great cat twitched and quivered nervously, its silver coat rippling to the play of sliding muscles beneath it.

And when Kioga walked forward again, the lithe beast was at his side, half a length to the rear, not more nor less. When an hour had gone, they still strode thus, but now it was the wild thing which led, and the human thing who followed, one hand ever at Mika's shoulder. The panther, a hunter by sight, the man, whose nostrils were the keener—thus they slipped silently through the mesh of tangled leaf and bough. Emerging at a shadowed forest pool, each slaked his thirst.

But of a sudden, at a short signal from Kioga, the lithe puma stiffened, only its tail-tip slowly oscillating. Again intelligence passed between them. An electric quiver flickered along Mika's satin sides. Then in one noiseless bound both melted into the shades near by. The shadowed glade was empty of life and sound.

LONG moments passed; a drop of dew condensing on a mossy bed dropped into the pool with a clear bell-like sound. The underbrush trembled, parted. A tall buck stood there, listening before emerging to lower muzzle to water. The soft throat swelled with every swallow, each gurgle amplified by stillness.

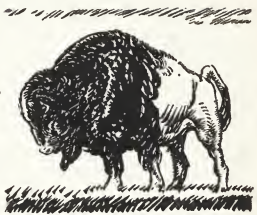
Then lightning struck. A silver bolt of doom crushed down the buck before it could so much as lift its head. A thick-set paw curved round, drove its sickles home behind the horns and wrenched. A snort, a crack of breaking bone, a breath outblown—as soon as that the warm young prey was dead.

From the thicket came Kioga now, to his first feed of fresh-killed meat in many a long day. As Mika ripped open the belly to get at the inner organs, the Snow Hawk attacked the quarter with his knife, severing a thick slice of juicy deer-ham and eating it on the instant.

Having devoured their fill, man and beast denned up close by to sleep.

Even in Kioga's dark world there were mitigating joys, which reached him now through the ears.

From down the valley the bugling of two wapiti pealed out, rhythmic, pure and clear across the distance, echoing and reëchoing. Outside the cave, a small dark bird fluted a prelude to its evensong, then hurled six top notes up to where the stars were coming out. This was a woodland thrush, a mocker-bird peculiar to



Nato'wa. Its song, the Indians say, is the first the spirit hears on approaching the Happy Hunting-ground. Kioga listened for the second bars.

They came suddenly, chiming forth in leisured golden swell. All through the purple glades the liquid stanzas floated one by one, no two alike, purling forth like water from a magic spring, each drop a different one. Theme after theme, ardor and triumph and rapture expelling one the other from that tiny silver throat, whose wondrous mechanism mixed plain air with sound, and brought forth Eden's music.

So for an hour this ounce of feathers held a stricken warrior thrall before its muted clarionet grew still. In that one hour a mocker-bird was king. But when sound's own incarnation nodded on its nest, the night-time jungle slowly came to life.

A snow-leopard's hoarse grating from a ravine near by. Aloft the *honka-honka* of wild geese wedging homeward for the night. From some far watch-tower the long-drawn mournful howling of wolves assembling, sinister and grim, boding ill to all who eat not meat, and many more that do. Everywhere, near and far, the startling hoot of hunting owls. Then, jarring out in frightful volume, the chest-cough of a hungry tiger, whereat every other voice paid tribute of utter silence, until his black-barred highness had passed. . . .

Kioga slept. For no good reason he dreamed of hotel beds and gleaming table silver and linen white as snow—and was awakened from his dream by the rumble of a tiger's roar and the dying bellow of a stricken buffalo-bull. An hour later morning dawned.

Eating again of the previous day's kill, the hunters rested awhile after the man-

ner of wild things. Then, after rising to stretch, the great cat played about, leaping, bounding, rolling soundlessly over before the Snow Hawk, and striking mock-blows with heavy forepaws. But Kioga did not retaliate as of old, and the puma soon desisted, for this was only one of many signs that Kioga was not himself.

Probably the white-toothed creature never did come to understand the nature of the Snow Hawk's affliction. Such abstract things are not within the compass of the animal mind. But a sense of uneasiness grew out of its own fierce nature. Ever and again the yellow glare of its eyes fell upon the man. The gaze which never hitherto could sustain Kioga's, now saw only open gray-green eyes with no expression behind them.

Frequently Kioga sensed the beast in this act of glaring. Ere now, a glance had been enough to bring Mika to instant terms. What the creature might do to him in the absence of that dominating glance, Kioga knew not. Jungle beast, caged or free, is inherently deadly, once beyond control.

And so when Mika's gaze burned on him, the Snow Hawk sought to soothe him in deep purring tones. Thus matters went for several days, and man and beast remained together until the kill was quite devoured. On the fifth day while moving through a tangled thicket well up the mountain-side, the twain surprised a monster moose lying upon a ledge some ten feet below their level. Mika, detecting it first by sight, shrank down quivering. Kioga, warned thus of prey, almost instantly caught its scent, and knew where it lay when he heard the occasional grinding of its teeth on tender twigs.

Now a meeting with Muswa in full autumn antlers is not a thing to be undertaken carelessly, even by such a hunter as Kioga. In this season, however, Muswa lay stripped of his horny armament, awaiting the hardening of the tender velvet-covered branches just beginning to form upon his head. Although at a later season Kioga might have foregone the risk in his present blind state, now—he lifted his hand from Mika's twitching shoulders.

THIS was the signal of consent. The long cat slunk crouching forward, gathered, readied—and sprang powerfully down. Simultaneously the Snow Hawk also dropped, thinking to strike before the prey might fairly gain its legs.

But in his eagerness he oversprang, and either way it would have been no use; for another, upon whom the hunters had not reckoned, betrayed their presence. A moose-bird rose screaming in the branches from its vigil over the lazy moose. Warned just in time, the great deer reared and swerved.

Mika, who had sprung for the shoulder, fell instead upon the haunch, taking hold with but one clutching paw. Kioga who at best had not aimed at all, but dropped blindly down, received a side-blow from the great deer's antler. Full grown and hardened, the horn would have slashed him through, but soft and tender as it now was, it only clubbed him aside.

As the moose crashed away, the puma was scraped off upon a branch and fell full upon Kioga, who lay stunned where his head had struck the ground.

The Snow Hawk was only dimly conscious of the moose's loud escape; but he was sharply aware of long keen hooks driving into his chest as a heavy weight bore down on him. When he stirred, two great paws applied traction through their claws. Swiftly he realized the truth:

MIKA was upon him, the lust to kill multiplied for having lost the moose. Blood ran from Kioga's ear, warm fresh and salt—a madness in Mika's nostrils. A hideous bubbling snarl issued from the puma's throat, like nothing Kioga had ever heard it utter before. And in an instant he understood—unhappy creature, Mika was struggling between instinct and intelligence. The uncompromising beast within cried to clutch, tear, eviscerate; while the brute mind, its function blurred by the smell of blood, delayed.

But mind was being overpowered by instinct. The claws drove deeper. The long incisors drew apart. The blue-black lips gleamed as they approached the Snow Hawk's pulsing throat, fanning him with a damp hot panting breath. Eyes fixed on the Snow Hawk's, Mika was crossing that jungle borderline which separates the ordinary forest killer from the man-eater, undeterred by the only light which might have stopped him now—the arresting gleam of human eye.

Suddenly Mika checked, as if a lash had exploded before his face; for in that self-same instant expression had returned to the eyes of the Snow Hawk, and few wild things can long sustain human gaze.

To Kioga, straining his sightless eyes upon the grinning jaws before him, it

seemed as if from darkness two great golden disks came suddenly into focus. Within them he saw sulphur fires burning brightly. As he lay silent, thinking this some illusion of the senses, the rest of Mika's snarling face became sharply outlined. And at the same instant he saw the cat shrink sharply back, as one caught in some guilty act might do. He heard its uncertain snarl, and saw the struggle the animal still waged against the thirst for blood, the long tail lashing furiously, the dog-teeth dripping.

AND then, thrilling to the wonderful truth, Kioga was on his feet in one mighty bound. Loud, commanding, full of the power to enforce, his voice caught the seething panther away from the intent to spring upon him.

"Down, Mika! Back, wild brother! Down, and be still!"

More than the words, it was the piercing gaze of the seeing eyes which brought the beast to submission. With head low, slowly it came forward, still snarling, to take the touch of the Snow Hawk's hand. Presently the snarl subsided, and Mika lay panting as one spent by some consuming passion.

But beside him the Snow Hawk, though stunned just a moment before, stood quivering to the miracle of sight returned. Not since that hour at the stake when a war-club had numbed him, had he looked upon a living moving thing. As in the moment of his blinding, his neck again felt numb where spine meets skull.

Touching the spot, he found it wet with blood, but the stiffness was gone. Apparently some small nerve there, some vital link in the wiring between eye and spinal cord, had been depressed the winter through, and now suddenly freed of pressure. Or else—

But if your sight, long gone, had just returned, you would not long pause to wonder why. Nor did Kioga.

The myriad things his eye had long forgot now crowded in: The slow light, rising up to pearl the southern sky and melt into the flaming wonder of northern dawn. The sun, a goblet brimming fire, whose face Kioga had not seen for many a month. Nearer by, an immense spider-web, each strand in its geometrical pattern gemmed with a pure and sparkling drop of morning dew. And everywhere the stately forest gilded by sunrise.

On a neighboring mountain lake the mists moved like regal gray swans before

taking silent wing to vanish in the sunlight. The stony cliffs were red as fire, the lake deeps bluer than vitriol, the forest emerald green and filled with dusky shadows. On a distant peak an endless turban of spotless snow was being unwound by the upper winds.

Dazed by this view of all he had so long been denied the sight of, and still uncertain of the permanency of his cure, Kioga moved through the forest. At his side Mika slouched, a different Mika, now that the disconcerting empty look had gone from the master's eyes.

Slowly they moved at first, for during the term of his blindness, slowness had been thrust upon Kioga. Uncertain were his first few leaps from place to place in following where the sinuous puma led. But after a little time growing confidence quickened the Snow Hawk's movements again. A ravine here yawned before him, across which Mika had sprung easily, waiting on its other side. Before the jump Kioga hesitated, poising as the eaglet stands before making its first flight from crag to crag. Then, leaping the gap, in one long bound Kioga pursued his wild companion, like an animal long caged, now free.

Up to a narrow ledge he sprang, and raced its length, and leaped again to another higher still, sure-footed as the beast he trailed. Fast though Mika went, Kioga followed now as swiftly, abandoning himself to the intoxication of leaping and climbing recklessly after all these months of sightless hesitation. Swift along a slanting tree he sped, to bound catlike through twenty feet of space and land on another bole, as light almost as the air through which he lithely flew. A short quick dash, the flash of muscled limbs, and the Hawk took wing again in soaring flight, before alighting in perfect control of balance, with motion utterly arrested.

UPON a lofty watching-place he paused then, exultant. None of his matchless vital strength was lost! Before he went further, he paused to give thanks to his Maker, in Whose own mold his fine physique might have been cast.

Wheeling then, he found Mika's eyes upon him again, two white-hot probes blazing up, as they had been blazing when his sight returned. Well he knew the nature of this tameless animal. For his safety, he must make sure of Mika.

One hand closed about his knife. He drew the other across a stone to cut the skin, and thrust it bleeding under Mika's

nose. The silken ears screwed back. Blue fires flickered in the puma's eyes. A hoarse snarl rose muttering in its throat. But from the bleeding wrist the beast drew back. Again Kioga tempted, and again Mika refrained, though twitching nervously in every cell.

Should Kioga risk its treachery, or drive home his knife while yet he could? Might not those white fangs again be at his throat in some critical moment?

Slowly the Snow Hawk raised the gleaming blade, drew back his arm for one hard thrust into the warm side. And then his resolution weakened, for beneath his hand the soft hide vibrated to an inner purr. He could not bring himself to strike.

"I am a man, and you are a beast," he thought aloud, sheathing the knife. "Yours it is to lust at the smell of blood, for nature made you so." Then, on another note: "Up, wild brother!"

At the familiar command the puma rolled erect, quivering and eager. And thus the man with beast at heel turned valleyward again.

But now Kioga led where even Mika could not follow. Dropping sheer thirty feet down a rugged cliff, he alighted in the dome-like crown of a tree below, vanishing within it. Then through the forest midway, agile as quicksilver, trapezing from branch to limb in long arching swings, pausing only to rob a nest of an egg. On again in easy bounding career, balancing along the high catwalks of the topmost canopy at a pace resembling flight. Here two great suspended vines linked cliff with tree and hung in huge skeins like the braids of a giantess. Across these Kioga swung, and so to earth again after that swift arboreal passage, to await Mika on a sun-bathed ledge.

STORM caught the pair roving toward the valley, and in the lee of an overhanging scarp man and animal crouched back, waiting for it to end. Rain curtailed them in, and dashed them with its spray. Lightning threw its molten links from cloud to cloud. Thunder rocked the mountains in rumbling bombardment.

When the storm had lifted, they continued on down, sprinkled with liquid moonstones when passing through each ferny glade and inhaling the rich piny air, freshed by the rainfall. On their way they glimpsed an eagle, striking down a flying wild-fowl. A fox appeared, a fat hare drooping from its jaws. And from the sequestered shade of a devil's-club

thicket a rare beast came prowling forth, and again they paused to watch.

It was a snow-leopard melanoid, dark as lampblack, with coaly reflections shimmering on its glistening coat. On a ledge, two hundred feet away, it sprang upon and carried low a deer.

And seeing these things, Kioga felt the hunting urge, half forgotten, flame hotly into being. His cup was not yet full, because he had not killed. Too long had he subsisted on a scavenger's fare and dined upon the kills of others. He craved to test his strength anew, to satisfy himself that he was completely whole.

TO this end he hunted alone, following the nearest stream with eyes alert to catch the spoor of game. But the recent rains had washed away all footprints. In his search he found the prey before he found its signs.

Close beside a waterfall, in a still pool off from the rushing stream, a huge black rock appeared to move. Fixing it with his eyes, the Snow Hawk watched intently. Then slowly, rising full of might, and streaming water, a buffalo bull heaved up on all fours. Kioga knew this species well, a woodland variant of the prairie bison, perhaps master of some small band adapted to this forest habitat. And of such a size that nothing less than a tiger would dare molest it, wallowing here in the open.

But now a hunter more to be feared than Guna crept upon the bull until its small red eyes were visible. Not twenty feet separated the bison from the man in concealment when Kioga bared his knife. Waiting until the bull turned its head aside, with one mighty spring he hurled himself through space.

Hard and true he struck upon the bull's high hump, his weight and impetus throwing it to its side in the stream. Then seizing hold by the long neck wool, ten times Kioga plunged in the metal knife, goading the bull each time into a prodigious splashing jump along the stream.

Up on the bank the shaggy beast then rushed, but there its wonderful vitality gave way. The forelegs buckled under. The short black horn plowed up the sand, and the buffalo lay dead.

For a few seconds Kioga savored the moment of triumph. And then again, as in the happy days of other years, the Snow Hawk's call to meat rang loudly through the glades, summoning Mika to a favorite kill.



He paused, exultant, to give thanks to his Maker. The myriad sights his eyes had long forgot, now crowded in: the stately forest gilded by sunrise, the cliffs red as fire. . . . Through swelling hills Kioga came back to plains unvisited since boyhood.

Deftly Kioga removed the animal's skin and laid it aside. The horns, too, he kept for uses known to him. Laying open the back with his sharp knife, he exposed the long dorsal tendons and cut it all away, along with many another cord whose location only a jungle anatomist could know. Severing the hoofs, these too he threw aside. Then with a great blow of a stone he split the skull, and removed the brain. This and the beast's own liver, mixed to an emulsion, he spread upon the raw hide, wrapped all up together and sank it with stones in a river pool.

When he and Mika had satisfied their hunger, it was nightfall. The following morning he woke, again to know that surge of joy at being sound in every sense.

Climbing several thousand feet, he sought one of those cedar treelets whose toughness comes of long slow growth on the heights. Cutting one down laboriously with his knife, he split out a stout stave; heated it over fire; straightened it, then charred it carefully and scraped away the char. Across the forming bow he later stretched a length of gut to give it added strength, and fixed this on with buffalo-hoof glue. Of strong back-sinew he twisted a good cord, and then strung up his hunting bow.

From the willows growing near a stream he made a dozen long straight shafts. With one of these he shot down a sleeping owl, and from its long wing-feathers trimmed vanes for his arrows, gluing and binding them on with sinew. Buffalo-bone yielded arrow-heads, which he fitted to the willow shafts.

Having fleshed and tanned the bull's hide, he whetted his knife and cut eight long tapering strips, whereof he plaited another stout whip, bound to a leg-bone handle. Thus armed, he strode without hesitation along the hidden paths of the greater forest carnivora.

WHEN he returned to the vicinity of the bull's carcass, he heard strident sounds of protest, and discerned Mika sprawling angrily on a lofty limb, while a prime young tiger lay athwart their kill, devouring it.

A hard-hurled stone brought savage protest from the feasting robber. Another, striking its chest, brought Guna charging forward upon the insolent man-whelp flourishing a long black snakelike thing in one hand. But leaping upon a ledge nearby, Kioga plied the lash, driving the tiger whence it came, and aid-

ing its retreat with a bark of the stinging bull-hide lash. . . .

And far away on another mountain's side, in the Ghost-Country, two white men, aided by several Shoni tribesmen, were erecting a monument of stones to the memory of the Snow Hawk. They fixed upon the monument a wooden slab, bearing a simple legend burned thereon.

Awhile the white men stood silent, with bared heads, then turned away, followed by their red-skinned companions.

A little later one of the Indians returned alone. Upon the rocky pile he laid each weapon on his person, a tomahawk, knife, bow and ten good arrows. Beside these he placed a haunch of venison—and by it a woman's small skinning-knife. Then he too slowly turned away.

In such manner James Munro and Dan La Salle abandoned all hope for Kioga. So too the faithful Kias, in his way, bade farewell to a lifelong friend, on behalf of himself and of Heladi.

And in the hidden cave, deep in the Tsus-gina-i, a bit of bark, thrust through a finger-ring, was Beth La Salle's last tribute to one who had gone away.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MESSAGE

THAT night, from some far ravine came a weird wild cry that brought Mika uncertainly to his four padded feet—the wail of a she-puma. Listening, Kioga's comrade prowled into the forest.

With Mika gone to answer the mating call, Kioga set out to reach the Hiwasi River, on which he had last seen his American Indians paddling northward the previous autumn, after he had freed them from their Shoni captors. But his blind wanderings had taken him far, and the spring rains had washed out his trail.

Reasoning that in his blind wanderings he must have come far north of the Shoni realm, he plunged into the forest due westward. And thus after several days of travel he came to the uppermost tributary of the Hiwasi, known as the River of Lost Canoes.

On this stream, assuming them to have come so far in safety, he should find some traces of his missing protégés. Scouting either shore for several days, he came at last upon signs of an old camp. Encouraged by this indubitable evidence of their passage, Kioga paused in his search. A tree lay prone beside the river; finding the trunk free from cracks

or decay, he went to work, and by burning, and hollowing it carefully, he shaped forth a rough dugout canoe.

Of other materials near to hand he carved a paddle. A long sapling shod on either end with buffalo horn would serve as either canoeing pole or spear. Well armed and with a sound craft beneath him, he now pushed off, and turned his face upstream, scanning either bank for signs of the band's nightly camps.

In one day he found old traces of two more camps, almost obliterated by time, but discernible nevertheless to the Snow Hawk's practiced eye. Frequently along the shore he glimpsed a branch, broken off long ago by human agency, the direction of its pendant end showing the direction of the band's progress. At a fork in the stream another trail-mark had been erected: upon one large stone a smaller rested, and to its left side another lay, indicating that they had taken the left fork.

So, by continuing watchfulness, Kioga ran down these old signs of passage, coming at last upon a camp which evidenced a longer pause by the band. A tree had been bared of bark for several feet; and burned upon the wood was a large wading bird, upside-down. In some manner

Big Crane had died, and the band had paused to leave this memorial.

At the next camping-place Kioga found the remains of an old canoe below a rapid, and not far away another monument—this time recording death of Sitting Coyote. Disaster had overtaken the band and wrecked their canoe, but only one had perished. Charred ashes and a stone scraper ashore spoke of another canoe built, in which to carry on.

Then one night, just at dusk, the old signs gave way to clearer prints, hardly more than a week old. Swiftly tracing these into the forest, Kioga came to a cave, back from the river. All signs pointed to an occupancy of many months.

The Snow Hawk rekindled the dead fire and looked about him. There were heaps of bones in here, a supply of firewood, several bark eating-dishes and utensils. Here was the discard of weapons manufactured on the spot, there a little pile of obsidian chips where some one had spent many hours making arrow- and spear-heads. But in the rising flames he saw something on the flat wall which explained much that had befallen the band since its liberation from Hopeka village. The stone bore this strange legend, done in charcoal and Indian pictographs:



Linking together the ideas suggested by the drawings, Kioga translated the message thus:

Tokala the Fox deserted the band. We looked for him, but rain washed out his trail. We saw ten canoes filled with enemies. We hid under a river-bank. A tiger seized Big Crane. We stopped to mourn. Our canoe overturned and Sitting Coyote was drowned. We built another canoe and went on. At sundown we camped. Stayed here three days. It snowed. Ice formed in river. We broke camp, took to river, but ice was too thick. Enemy scouts found our camp and overtook us. We fought a battle. We killed three men and took scalps. Could go no farther. Grass Girl was ill. We found a good cave. Hid canoes in forest. Held another council and decided to stay here. Grass-Girl's second child was born. We named him Gets-Away. Kills Bull took Pretty Eagle to wife. Remained here six moons. Killed fifteen deer and a bear. Ice finally broke up. Took to canoes again. Snow Hawk follow. We will wait three days where river ends.

(Signed) Old Crow Man.

Lingering only to arrow a few wild birds and satisfy his hunger, Kioga took up the chase again, following the river to its last navigable point. Here he found concealed the band's two canoes hidden in the thickets, and another trail-sign pointing up the mountainside to a high pass across the divide, and down into the western foothills which mark the beginning of the Great Plains of Nato'wa.

Upon a stream flowing westward Kioga found the last camp, and a new and almost finished canoe. On the ground were signs of an ambushade. The earth was torn up as by a violent encounter, and tracked by a myriad moccasined feet. Bloodstains led to the water's edge, and there the trail appeared to end.

To Kioga the story was clear, almost, as if he had seen it happen. Preparing to embark again, the American band had been fallen upon by the Wa-Kanek, on their way into the rich mountain strongholds of the Shoni to avenge their defeat of the previous autumn and plunder the villages anew. There would be no more signs from the band, he thought sadly, as he completed the canoe which they had begun.

But in this Kioga erred. As he paddled downstream he found one more message. In a still pool beside the main channel an arrow floated, attached to a thong weighted to the bottom by a stone.

Some one had contrived to let him know that they had been carried off downstream. Of itself this was a tribute. The simple faith of the band in Kioga's promise to follow had endured throughout all these months.

In contrast to the brawling mountain rivers of the forest lands, the stream on which he now floated was but a languid serpent twisting sluggishly through its wooded banks, finally split into several channels by willow-choked islands swarming with wild-fowl. Here, one would say, there could be no further trail; but to eyes trained like Kioga's:

On the still waters near the shore, floats a thin dusting of petals and pollen from the spring blossoms of trees and plants. Close to shore on the silent surface he passes, observing the willow stems at waterline. For perhaps an inch above the present water-level each stalk is coated with the yellowish powdery drift—raised by the wash of forging canoes. A wavy line of drying drift on a sandy bar confirms the first signs. Where the still water is clear of pollen, he next observes the shallow bottom for traces of mud-rolls raised by newly passing paddles. In the underwater grasses he looks for—and sees—a darker line where the round of a canoe has forced the spears to either side. A freshly bruised willow near shore, a broken water-plant—these and twenty other marks guide him in this seemingly uncanny deciphering of the undecipherable. And at every bend he watches for shoremarks where canoes may have been drawn up on the bank. Scarce a swimming duck could pass in these revealing shallows without leaving a trace which those keen eyes would note.

FOLLOWING the trail with growing caution, Kioga came now to where a spider, mounted on a reed, floated from its spinnerets a silver thread across the trail, repairing damage done its web within this present hour. The fresh break in the strands showed at the height of Kioga's own head. Bending low, he passed beneath the web and shortly came upon the place where the Indians had disembarked. All vigilance now, he observed how the stream lost itself in a swampy savanna inhabited by snakes and birds and prowling beasts of the plains. And it was here, in the last of tree-cover, that he found hidden many dugout canoes. These are often used by the Wa-Kanek in transporting captives

and plunder from Shoni territory when their horses are otherwise employed.

Before proceeding any farther, Kioga towed these craft to a different hiding-place far in the mazes of the swamp and concealed them carefully, the better to hamper future raids upon his own tribes. For though they had denied him, the Shoni were still his people, and their well-being was important to him.

Tying up his own canoe, he then took his weapons, and slipping through the edge of the swamp-lands, came at last to the end of leafy concealment. Parting the branches, he looked out over open rolling plains stretching endlessly before him. Somewhere in those billowing grass-grown hills the Wa-Kanek camped. And among them, captives again, were the members of his missing band of American Indians.

AS he would have stepped forward, some instinct murmured—he drew back instead. And well for him he did! For a flashing arrow whisked past his face, struck a limb and glanced into the ground close by. Facing whence it came, he slipped behind a fallen tree, watching, listening, and trying to scent his hidden enemy. Picking up the shaft, he gave it a quick glance. Shorter than a Shoni arrow, and pointed with chalcedony where theirs is of obsidian, he recognized it for a plainsman's bolt. A Wa-Kanek rear scout lay in wait, dangerously close.

Ensued then a long half-hour of silence, the wonderful patient waiting of Indian foes, each watching for the other's first false move to drive in a killing shaft. Nor could Kioga allow his adversary more than three such moves. He had but two remaining arrows of his own, one a faulty shaft, and that with which he had been so suddenly saluted—three in all. Whereas the unseen doubtless carried a full quiver.

Fixing his eyes on no one point, and thus commanding a view of all, Kioga watched, well knowing the foe waxed as anxious as himself to end the meeting with a true heart shot. And presently, to test the mettle of the enemy, he exposed himself. A quick shaft flickered through the intervening leafage. A close shot, but hastily loosed, for it went high—yet even so, flying only a hand's breadth from his head. The enemy was no mean marksman.

Then came that for which Kioga had waited, a tremor of a bush as the other



changed position, that a quick return might not find him sleeping there. Aiming a little ahead Kioga drew and let fly. A sudden commotion evidenced the foe's astonishment, though the shaft had glanced too low to do damage. But in that moment's discomposure Kioga retrieved the other's second arrow, an equally light straight slender shaft of exquisite workmanship and balance.

Selecting then the worst of his arrows, which still numbered three, Kioga knocked it to the cord and looked forth again. This time he descried the upright plume of a warrior's headdress, a trifle too readily shown to disguise that old trick of drawing an enemy's shots. But again Kioga loosed, allowing something for the faulty arrow. The feathers of the wobbling reed, but not its point, knocked down the plume.

Instantly the hideous painted features of a Wa-Kanek warrior showed in mockery above a fallen log, and as quickly vanished on the echo of a derisive yell.

A moment Kioga waited, silent. Then, chancing all on a sudden thought, he observed the direction of the cross-breeze, and allowed for his stronger bow and the lighter arrows which the foe had sent him. One of these he then set against his string, holding the other with the bow hand in a position favoring rapid nocking. Drawing back the cord, he held lightly and steadily for an instant, before loosing the arrow. Swiftly as the one shaft flew, the second—Kioga's last—fled after, as if drawn along by the first, which whisked within an inch of the hidden Wa-Kanek.

Instantly the warrior rose to jeer anew—and jeering, stood smitten through the skull by that hard-driven second shaft.

Well served by the arrows of the foe, Kioga was halfway across the field of

shooting before the man fell upon the log which had sheltered him. Swiftly the Snow Hawk appropriated all those perfect arrows, a small arm-shield of purported "medicine" value, the belt containing knife-sheath, pouch of colored face-paints and sundry other small articles. The warrior's bow he struck into the ground erect beside the body; the knife he placed upon the breast.

Then swiftly, lest further loss of time cost his migrant band dearly, he struck out alone among the foothills in search of the dead man's mount, which should be picketed somewhere hereabout.

A snorting sound, the clatter of hoofs and a medley of growls issuing from a coulée led him swiftly thither. He beheld first a ring of prairie wolves, lesser cousins of the great mountain breed. These circled in narrowing snarling periphery about a fallen horse, around whose legs a twisted picket rope was tangled. Near by, telling eloquently of a gallant defense, three wolves lay crushed and broken by the pounding hoofs of the fallen animal. But exhaustion was heavy now upon the struggling horse.

Quick singing cuts with the snaking whip brought yelps of pain from the wolves, which scattered and fled like wisps of yellow mist at the voice of man so near and loud and suddenly at hand.

AT Kioga's approach the fallen horse heaved erect and stood a moment quivering in every muscle, foam flying from its champing jaws to fleck the deep broad chest. Slowly Kioga came nearer, drinking in the beauty of that perfect stallion. Full sixteen hands tall it stood, garbed in winter coat of smoky gray, a sight to kindle an Arab's heart. Legs slim as a wapiti's, long and straight as rods of tempered steel, whereon for all its heavy coat the tendons showed forth cable-clear. Eyes large and brilliant in a small, fine-chiseled head; muzzle short and smooth, its flaring nostrils sucking in the prairie air. Body short, compact, close-coupled; flanks sleek—here surely was the mount of a powerful chief.

Down again it fell, in rope entangled. Instantly Kioga was at its head, pressing it to earth, stroking, caressing, speaking not in words but only in sound—for thus the heart of beasts is reached. Soon its struggles ceased, its breathing eased, the eye-whites no longer showed. Holding to its rope, Kioga moved aside. Unaided the stallion rose on nimble feet to yield presently and nibble at a prof-

fered handful of grass. Then to cool water Kioga led it, rubbed its sweating limbs with grass, and washed clean the wounds of recent battle.

Then mounting, he tried its paces, felt out its gait, watched its responses, working it in a small circle, as he had learned to do in civilization from men who never dreamed of such a horse as this. After a little he knew that seldom before had man bestrode the very wind.

OF the Nato'wan horses little is known. The land itself is still a wilderness, with few of its fauna classified. But science says that long before the white man came, there roamed through North America a horse as large or larger than the steeds we ride today. Such is the testimony of the asphalt pits and fossils found from Texas to Alaska.

Perhaps in some forgotten time, when the continents of earth were linked together in the North, a set of common ancestors gave life to all the wild breeds. As to this, even experts disagree. This much, however, is certain:

The horse of far Nato'wa is not the animal known to civilized man. Perhaps it is related to the extinct true-American horse, for that too was tall and swift; perhaps descended from the wandering herds still roaming northern Asia, and bred to greater stature by man, or influenced by milder habitat. . . .

On the broad trail of the Wa-Kanek horse-band Kioga now followed through the swelling hills, keeping ever to the valleys until twilight overtook him. Dismounting and picketing his horse, he climbed to the top of a ridge, scanning the hills ahead. Though he saw no signs of human presence, somewhere in that billowing waste the nomad Wa-Kanek dwelt. The horse would know where. Remounting, he gave the stallion its head, and after a moment of hesitation the animal swung into an easy gallop bespeaking vast reserves of power. With the motion of that fine beast's barrel between his thighs, Kioga came back to the plains, unvisited since his boyhood.

Just once, upon an open stretch, he asked for speed, and felt that surging animal all but leap from under him as it fled through the falling darkness. When the moon had risen high, they paused for another reconnoiter and more cautiously then went forward, for Kioga had caught the smell of wood smoke.

Leaving his mount in a coulée, Kioga scouted forward. From a ridge he saw

the red core of a watch-fire burning; five men lay about it, feet to blaze. A sixth sat erect and alert; and as Kioga waited, he woke another. Among the Wa-Kanek no camp is ever left unguarded. The watch was changing. Peering about, Kioga saw no tents, nothing but this small fire and a string of horses in the near shadows. A mere scouting-party, perhaps, waiting the return of the warrior Kioga had killed, ere continuing on in the track of the main band.

Beyond view of the camp Kioga sprang to horse again; and two hours before dawn, on topping a rise, came into view of the Wa-Kanek camp, already astir and preparing for the travel of the coming day. Speculating, it seemed to Kioga that he might unite himself with the captive American Indians in one of several ways: either by attempting a night-time liberation; by slipping in the next night and leading the band to fall upon their sleeping captors; or by approaching openly on foot, and when received among the Wa-Kanek, seeking other means. The second plan involved hazards of discovery, but delay was most undesirable, for in another day or two they would unite with the main Wa-Kanek tribes, and torture or death would swiftly follow for the captives.

Deciding on the third method, Kioga hobbled his horse and neared the camp on foot without attempting concealment. A sudden outcry announced that he was seen, and several warriors rushed to their arms. Advancing with the sign of peace, the Snow Hawk suffered them to come near, hoping that none save his own band would recognize him as the former war-chief of the Shoni.

While others covered him with their ready arrows, two Wa-Kanek braves met him fifty yards from camp. When they spoke in their own tongue, he shook his head. Thereafter they resorted to the universal sign-talk, demanding to know his identity and business.

"I will answer to your chief alone," signed Kioga, adopting the haughty air best used in dealing with these suspicious and headstrong savages. "Take me before him. I bring big news."

THE two exchanged glances. Realizing they were many and he but one, they permitted his approach, surrounded him and thus entered the watching camp.

Among others whose eyes were on him, Kioga saw at last the members of his own band. After a single meaningful

glance their way, he knew by their startled expressions that he was recognized, and he turned away. To the single tent in the encampment the guards led him, pausing before the closed flap to cough as notice of their presence. And soon a strange hoarse testy voice from within, giving some brief command in Wa-Kanek. By the paintings on the tepee Kioga judged that here slept a prominent personage: by the tone of harsh command, one of unquestioned authority.

Ensued a wait of half an hour. Then with a rustle of garments some one was approaching the flap from within, when suddenly there came an interruption from beyond the camp: a wild shrill yell of triumph, followed by the pound of several galloping horses, hard-driven. Wheeling with the others, Kioga saw a bombshell thrown amid his plans.

Too late he regretted his oversight in failing to run off the horses of the rear-guard scouts. For down the nearest hill a band of five horsemen came rushing, leading the fine gray stallion by its rope behind them. In another moment they would be in the camp, adding to the rising uproar—during which it was all too probable that Kioga would be cut down without a hearing.

IN this moment of crisis there remained but one slim hope. Without a second's hesitation Kioga seized this. Hurling his guards aside, from one he snatched a war-club. Swinging it freely, he bounded toward the band's horses, picketed in one string. A moment to drag up the picket-rope, a spring upon the nearest mount, the kick of heels dug deep—and then away to the thundering roar of one hundred twenty racing hoofs, straight into the path of the oncoming horsemen.

In utter consternation the yelling Wa-Kanek could lose no arrows without cutting down their own scouts, bewildered like themselves by this amazing turn of events. Of the scouts, three wheeled their mounts aside. Two others, grasping the situation, bore down upon Kioga.

He met the first headlong, hurling him aside with the shoulder of his horse. But the second, who led the gray stallion still, swung wickedly with his club. Though it merely grazed Kioga, it broke the back of his plunging mount, and the beast sank beneath him. Leaping clear, Kioga laid low the warrior with his own



The warrior rose to jeer—and stood smitten through the skull

hurled club, and drawing his knife cut the rope which held the gray stallion.

Springing then upon its back, he performed a lightning pivot and leaned to the wondrous mechanics of the gray bolt's gallop, urging it on with lips at its ear. Like lightning from a cloud that swift horse responded, and in another twenty seconds he would have left pursuit hopelessly behind; but unhappily the other scouts had turned, and though dropping swiftly back, had swung and thrown their leather lariats. One missed, but two others settled about his body, snatching him from his seat.

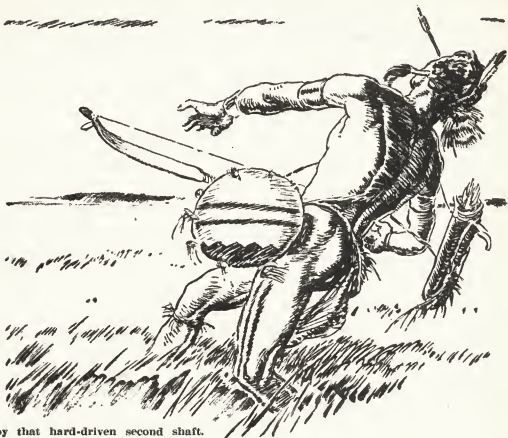
With screams of triumph ringing in his ears he struck the ground and felt his bonds go slack—but only for an instant. Then he glimpsed what lay in store for him. Speeding past, not twenty feet between them, his captors swerved apart in unison. Caught between both ropes, he would be torn in two.

Slashing with his knife, he successfully severed one rope. Then running as swiftly as he might with the other to lessen the shock when the dragging rope drew taut, he sawed at it with the dulling knife. But this strand did not part, and its ensuing jerk compressed his vitals,

snapped him from his feet and dragged him swiftly campward at its end.

On rocky ground, he had surely been broken and crushed by this ordeal. But the heavy grass somewhat cushioned the shocks; and thus, still clutching his knife, he was drawn conscious through the camp, and men struck at him as he slithered swiftly past. Snagging at last and breaking, the rope released him. His course was checked almost before the door of the painted lodge. His knife flew from his grasp and fell before some one standing there. Rising dazed but still undaunted, Kioga stood disarmed, waiting for the end, but determined to sell his life dearly. Like hounds upon the cornered quarry, the braves rushed in for the kill.

Then, shrill as the voice of a screaming eagle, a cry slashed through the bedlam. The great authority before the lodge was calling off the dogs of war. And despite the white heat of flaming passion, the warriors stopped in their tracks—a thing which Kioga noted with subconscious wonderment. The reaction of relief was such that his strength now ran from him, and he pitched forward, at the feet of the figure at the lodge.



by that hard-driven second shaft.

A little time he lay deaf to all that happened near him. Soon sounds came through again—quick voices, the snort of horses. Sensations also came—cold wet upon his hurts, rough horny hands feeling of his brow and pushing back his hair. At last he looked up, through narrowed lids, to see an old woman's shadowed face bending above him.

A small woman she was, dressed in buckskin richly studded with elk's teeth and worked with twisted horsehair. The early sun fell on a seamed but characteristic face. Thin pursing lips, long hooked nose, black and glittering eyes, wide-spaced above prominent cheek-bones, and sunk deep in a mesh of wrinkles—these, and a proud, fearless carriage of the head, marked her as one of keen mental vigor and great determination.

As she looked down upon him, crooning with a strange and touching tenderness, the Snow Hawk saw that her cheeks were wet with tears. Opening wide his eyes, he looked straight into hers.

Then, oddly, she drew in a breath of quick surprise and shrank back, the old eyes narrowing as she scanned Kioga's face anew. The quick staccato of her words beat down on him in questioning

tones. He shook his head, and made the hand-signs for "I do not understand." Reverting to signs, she tried again:

"Whence came you?"

"From the forest-land to the east."

"How do you ride the gray stallion?"

"The prize of war, Mother."

The old woman's breath caught suddenly in her throat at that word. "You remember me, then?" she asked with an enigmatic expression on her face which the Snow Hawk was to remember later.

"How could I forget?" he answered, anxious to fathom the reason for her peculiar actions, and pitying her too, he knew not why.

"Last night I dreamed you would return," she said in a low voice. "The Great Ones are kind. But do you remember no word of your own tongue, my son?"

"I speak only Shoni and the hand-talk," answered Kioga. "I have dwelt long among the forest people."

"*Ai-ho*," she said heavily. "Yes, you have been gone long. But no matter. You are returned." Again her horny hand smoothed back his hair. "Returned a mighty warrior—you who were such a fearful child! But tell us"—including

with a sweep of the arm the chiefs and warriors near by,—“what of Twenty Man, who owned the gray stallion?”

Held by those penetrating eyes, it seemed to Kioga that nothing could long deceive the keen brain behind them. And so, though he had lent himself to deception in this matter of identity, he spoke the truth of Twenty Man.

“I killed him, Mother, who would have killed me first.”

“Ah!” Quick and sharp her exclamation came, as she looked about her and said something in Wa-Kanek; whereat the men nodded, eying the newcomer with intent interest.

“Do you know who Twenty Man was?” she then asked with the hands. “But no—you would not remember. He was the greatest warrior in all our ten-score bands. You will gain fame of this, and hatred too, for his family is strong among our people.”

“He died with honor—I will swear that by the knife.”

“May his spirit rest!” signed the old beldame. Then, to the others: “Give him food and drink. Clean his wounds and let him rest. You, Me-kon-agi, instruct him in our tongue. What he has forgotten will soon return. Now, go.” Looking straight before her, with folded arms the old woman took their instant obedience with the air of one long accustomed to it; and again Kioga marveled at her control over these fierce-eyed warriors.

Spurning their aid, he stood erect unaided, looked long into the mystery of those sharp black eyes of hers, then turned without another sign and allowed them to lead him whither they would.

As he went the old woman was chanting softly in a hoarse voice what later he learned was the Song of Thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XXIII

FORT TALKING RAVEN

IN the village of Hopeka among the Shoni people, Beth La Salle and the others now shared the lodge of Menewa, father of the Indian maid Heladi. The whites were not long learning the Shoni tongue, and many a tale was poured into their ears about the Snow Hawk. Some were fact, some hearsay, some purest fiction; but all arose out of the strange mystery surrounding his early life.

Beth heard from the lips of half-grown children tales of many a rescue from the

jaws of wild beasts in the days of Kioga's outlawry; of food mysteriously thrown to the starving in mid-winter; of succor to those wounded, benighted or lost in the tangles of the farthest wildernesses. Men spoke that name with awe and respect, women with a sigh of regret that he was gone.

THIS was the man Beth had thought a savage creature of passion and might alone—to whose gift of everything she had made no return! For a time she was near prostrate with grief.

But the bravery of Heladi braced her spirit; the tragedy of Kioga's passing had drawn Beth and Heladi together in bonds known sometimes to those who have shared a mutual sorrow and danger. Along with Tokala the Fox, they now occupied one lodge-section in Menewa's great dwelling.

Flashpan was installed in another part with his chest of trade articles—and his monkey. He conducted a brisk business in trinkets and was amassing a considerable store of animal peltry, the first white trader to pursue this calling among the red men of far Nato'wa. Flashpan was looked on with some awe, partly because of his association with Placer the monk, and partly because he did things which were, to the Indians, inexplicable.

Each day, rain or shine, he went forth in a canoe with whatever Indians he could persuade to go along, and explored all the shallow creeks near by. He carried a little pan; and at various places along the streams he would step knee-deep into the water, scoop up a panful of sand and slosh it gently around. Occasionally he would extract a few yellow grains from among the sands, and examine them closely, muttering the while; until at last, in a certain stream, his panning showed quantities of gold.

Beasts of the forest and the forces of the elements meant nothing to Flashpan now. He was one in spirit with Cræsus of Smyrna, Darius of Persia and the naked black slaves who worked Egypt's sweltering gold-mine tunnels under the whips of the Pharaohs. . . .

The hand of one of his Indian friends fell upon his shoulder.

“Guna!” whispered the other, and in broken English, pointing down-stream along shore: “Man-eater. Hungry. He come fast!”

“Shet up, blast ye!” answered Flashpan testily. “Shoo 'im away, Redskin. I hev found a gold crick, an' I aim to

find the mother-lode, spite o' tigers and devils and hell's-fire! I—"

But the Indians waited to hear no more. As the black-barred tiger came in to view on one shore, they retreated to another, shouting to Flashpan to follow.

The tiger crouched quivering among the reeds. Not to be dissuaded from his pursuit, Flashpan suddenly paused, gazing intently into the waters at his feet. At that precise instant the tiger's tail snapped erect; simultaneously Flashpan dropped to his knees in the stream. And the long heavy body of the springing cat soared over him, impaling itself upon the dozen spears in the hands of the Indians.

Utterly oblivious, Flashpan knelt there in a glittering riffle, white-faced and with bulging eyes, sifting through his hands a continuous stream of wet sand thickly powdered with pure gold. He scarcely heard the shouts of the Indians nor the roars of the tiger.

For he who, "liked the lookin', not the findin', sir," had at last struck treasure!

"Lordy! Oh, Lordy. . . I've struck it rich—rich! An' this is only dust. Somewheres up that crick is the mother-lode, the pocket it comes out of!"

And thus, muttering already of the riches around the next bend, Flashpan filled his pockets until they would hold no more, and dazedly waved his Indians back to Hopeka.

AMONG the Indians friendly to the whites were Brave Elk, loyal to Kiooga until that final moment on the stake; Walks Laughing, simple-minded medicine-man; old Menewa himself, and the warriors he controlled; in addition to the allies of Kias, lifelong friend of the Snow Hawk. To the trusted members of this little group the secret of the *Narwhal's* hiding-place had been revealed. Messages were exchanged between James Munro and his men aboard the ship, apprising them of circumstances in the village. . . .

Munro himself, along with Dan, Kias and a handful of others, now absented themselves in the northern wilderness on a canoe-voyage of exploration. The journey ended in a council among the headwaters of the Hiwasi. Curious as to what lay in the great mountains beyond, Munro prevailed upon the Indians to accompany him in a further search. The expedition came to an end far up a mountainside. Close to exhaustion, and handicapped by the rarefied air, the little band paused.

While they rested at this highest camp, Kias shot down with an arrow a large hawk, which fell into their midst, pierced through by the lucky shaft. The Indian brought it before Munro, calling his attention to its beak: Upon the horny upper mandible were a series of Indian heads, graved into the surface with exquisite skill, in the manner of intaglio work, and supplemented by minute characters which baffled interpretation. And about the dead hawk's leg was a small band of beaten copper, also engraved.

"Man's handicraft," said Munro in answer to Dan's query. "But who they are—shall we know? We've come as high as we can go."

ON returning to Hopeka, Munro set about to locate a certain ivory tusk, reputed to be in the possession of a northern tribe, and mentioned conspicuously in Lincoln Rand's old logbook. Long search brought it to light among the Tugari, who dwell among the headwaters of the Hiwasi; and after some bargaining, Munro traded for it ten packets of steel needles, six hatchets, and a dozen small hand-mirrors, and bore it home to Hopeka for study.

Two weeks later a hunting trip on the coast, far north of where the *Narwhal* lay concealed, brought him yet another scientific find, more valuable by far than the quantities of walrus meat which the hunt provided. Among the kills was one old bull, the largest of the lot, with enormous tusks. But their great length thrilled the scientist less than the remarkable carvings, worn but still discernible from roots to points.

The technique of these carvings was startlingly like those on the elephant tusk; and some of the mnemonic signs resembled those upon the beak of the hawk. To find creatures thus adorned while still living, by unknown artisans, gave rise to liveliest speculations in Munro's mind. Laborious efforts at translation indicated some strange, unknown Indian culture, with an economy as closely dependent upon some living form of the elephant, as was that of the American red man upon the buffalo. What a strange race they must be, whose glory is borne into the high heavens on the wings of a hawk, and carried even to the depths of the sea on the tusks of a walrus!

But Munro's eagerness to delve further into the mystery of that lost race was halted by developments at Hopeka.

Day by day, the machinations of that red Machiavelli, Half Mouth, were adding fuel to the fires of unrest among the Shoni tribes. A second and more vicious skirmish was fought between the two factions almost within sight of Hopeka; and the corpses floated past in view of the uneasy inhabitants. The village was become an armed camp, with neighbors arming against one another.

IT was bad enough to have become detested by those medicine-men from whose superstitious mumbo-jumbo Munro had delivered the snake-bitten child of old Seskawa. But the scientist now incurred the active enmity of Half Mouth as well.

Half Mouth's fame rested upon foundations of fear, and his skill as a magician. In this art he was without peer among all the Shoni. To the observant scientist, the workings of his craft were clear and simple, yet a source of admiration, for Shingas was indeed a past master in the deceptive arts.

Munro would have done nothing to betray a fellow-magician had not Shinga himself provoked him. But one night when the Indian had performed several feats of magic for the gathered tribesmen, he ended his exhibition with a feat which invariably evoked gasps of astonishment from his audiences; and thereafter trouble came fast.

To the uninitiated, it was indeed a fearsome sight: With a sharp knife Shingas allowed a confederate to slash him across the bared abdomen, whereafter he seemed to bleed profusely—from a gaping wound.

To the great Half Mouth this was apparently a mere scratch, for with a gesture he drew about him his robe, performed another trick, turned his robe over to his confederate—and behold!—Shingas stood before them unscratched!

Turning then to Munro, Shingas spoke for the benefit of all those about him. "The pale-skin is all-powerful, it is said. Let him do this thing, or confess the weakness of his magic."

Laughing tolerantly, Munro would have allowed the shaman to pass his spectacular trick off as true magic. But the Indians had long desired to see the works of him who had raised a child from the dead, and they now clamored for a public demonstration of the occult.

Challenged thus, Munro must perform or else suffer loss of the prestige which his previous acts had gained him. Accordingly he began a demonstration which lasted for an hour. Simple devices

came first; gradually he progressed to more difficult illusions, until at last he held the entire assemblage spellbound at the wonders wrought by his skilled fingers and hands. Munro then suddenly flashed back to the shaman's own feat, addressing the Indians thus:

"You saw Shingas cut himself open and cure himself in the time it took to remove his blanket. That is great magic. But mine is greater still, for I will make the blanket tell you how the deed was done." And before the shaman could forestall him, Munro seized and flung the blanket open, holding one end.

A great slab of animal fat, deeply slashed, flopped to the ground, followed by a pierced skin bladder, still oozing the red berry-juices with which the shaman had simulated blood. The people gasped with astonishment. Then some one laughed, and in another moment gales of merriment swept the villagers.

In that moment was born Half Mouth's undying hatred of the white man who thus exposed him to one of the strongest forces in red men's society, the light of public scorn. And he began to plot secretly to destroy Munro and his associates.

That night there came to the lodge of the pale-skins the gift of a side of venison and a basket of small-fruits. Accompanying the gift were the compliments of Half Mouth himself. Evidently the animus of the recent past was to be considered forgotten.

MUNRO set the meat to roast and invited the generous donor to be present at the feast. But Shingas lay in apparent pain resulting from overindulgence at the previous night's feast. . . .

Passing over some of the fruit from Half Mouth's basket, Munro found the eager monkey at his elbow, and gave him a liberal helping. Before he could turn away, Placer bit into a wild plum—then suddenly screeched, while an extraordinary expression overspread his simian features.

Ejecting his first bite with force, the monkey thereupon flung the remainder of his fruit piecemeal in every direction. And when Flashpan would have eaten, he protested with such excitement that the little man desisted, to humor his pet.

Two of the Shoni, however, swallowed their fruit before Munro sprang abruptly to his feet, fear clutching at his heart, and struck the remaining fruit from the hands of Beth and Heladi and Tokala.

"Don't touch it!" he ordered sharply. "I believe that devil put something deadly in it."

Scarcely had the words left his lips when the two Indians fell to the ground doubled up in agony. And not all Munro's knowledge aided them one iota, for the poison was one for which he did not know an antidote. Before the horrified eyes of the party, the Indians expired.

Dark-faced and terrible, Kias turned vengefully toward Shingas' lodge, but Munro's hand on his wrist held him back. "Wait, Kias! We have others than ourselves to think of."

For a moment he thought Kias would fling off his hand. Then, conquering his all-powerful hatred, Kias agreed, and said with an expression impossible to convey: "I will wait. But when it comes time for him to die—leave him to these hands. One of these who now lies dead is my clan-brother."

ALL night Shingas waited patiently in his lodge for the white men to finish what he had intended to be their last feast. But not a mouthful more of his donation was eaten save by a flock of crows, found dead beside the venison on the following day. And while Shingas waited, the prey—far from being dead—was making plans to quit the village.

Munro had assembled his friends and allies about him in Menewa's lodge and stated their position in this way:

"We are only a handful compared to the numbers of the enemy. We can't take sides without exposing ourselves to treachery from either side. It's time we chose a middle road and made plans to safeguard ourselves."

Old Menewa answered to that. "Swift Hand, we look to you for counsel. Since the Snow Hawk has gone away, the Long Knives increase in numbers and boldness. We older chiefs are powerless. If you wish to escape to your great canoe-with-wings, we will give what help we can. But what then will we do, our numbers lessened by your departure?"

Before replying, Munro considered several facts: The damage to his ship would not yet have been repaired sufficiently to permit an immediate sailing. In a few months winter would be here again, discouraging departure until the following spring. His first responsibility was the safety of his white friends; but the Indian people who had come to trust in him could not be forsaken in their present position.

"We are not ready to desert our good friends," he answered at last. "There is another way, I think. A league up the Hiwasi there is an island called by you the Isle Where Ravens Talk, which splits the river. If we could secretly fortify and occupy that island, we could laugh at danger. Those who wished could join us there in safety."

This, after further discussion, was the plan decided upon.

Accompanied by the ship's carpenter, Hanson, Dan, Kias and several of his braves, Munro went forth the next day ostensibly on one of his ordinary journeys—to the astonishment of no one but Shingas, who learned with amazement mixed with fear that the whites had survived his poisons.

Landing upon the Isle Where Ravens Talk, they quickly scaled its heights and surveyed the terrain for its possibilities of defense. A spot was chosen a little back from a lofty cliff where some ancient slide had deposited rubble. With the materials at hand, a beginning was made upon a wall.

Water from a tumbling spring near by was diverted by means of a hollowed half-log, and a kind of mortar mixed of clay and stones wherewith to bind the double wall into a homogeneous whole, and the space between was further strengthened with branches and vines to retain the mortar. When Munro departed, leaving further construction to Hanson, the work of fort-building was well advanced. Thereafter each day a few Indians were directed thither with arms and as much food as they could carry without arousing suspicion.

SO little by little the fort-to-be was provisioned; at the end of a week, though by no means completed, it was in a condition suitable for occupancy whenever the hour of need should arise.

But Munro meanwhile was far from idle. Digging along the river-bank in a stratum of red earth he had noticed, he uncovered at last a streak of rust-colored sand which indicated a considerable iron content. And of this many backloads were transported aloft to the fort.

He confided his plans to Flashpan, and the miner turned his cunning fingers and clasp-knife to certain mysterious tasks; he also gathered up a supply of wild turkey leg-bones, which he split and laminated together with glue and bits of wire. One by one he carved pieces of wood into peculiar shapes.

From the walls of certain caves, which Munro located after a long search, he then scraped quantities of a whitish salt-like substance; and from an old inactive volcanic crater upriver he removed baskets of incrustated stuff with a sulphurous smell. All these objects and ingredients found their way ultimately into the building fort.

And the whites were not a day too advanced in the execution of their plans. Each day told a grimmer tale than the preceding one. Indians went out of Hopeka in their canoes, never to return. Frightful tales of massacre and internecine warfare were brought in by those who made the river passages in safety under force of arms.

The rivers were full of painted specters, their movements sudden and mysterious, who waylaid travelers and killed stragglers. Savage men roamed about like lynxes and wolves, ravaging everywhere. Being always in motion, they were gone when pursuit arrived. Thus the blind warfare of the forest continued without cessation.

Those terrible indicators of violent killing, the scalp-racks, daily sagged lower under the weight of drying trophies. The wilderness uprising, born of discontent in a few savage breasts, was now well under way. The union of the Seven Tribes, accomplished at such great labor by the Snow Hawk, was crumbling back into the old bloody enmities. Where peace had endured a while, red barbarity was returning, the more terrible since no man knew the secret affiliations of his brother.

One night a spy in the employ of Kias came to Munro with warning that all the whites had been singled out for slaughter an hour before dawn. At this point in the Indian uprisings, Munro, aided by Kias, quietly managed the transfer of his entire party from the palisaded village to the little fort on the island. Twenty-odd of Kias' men covered their silent retreat from the side gate of Hopeka, and in a slashing downpour of rain, followed. Numbers of other villagers came later, fearing to remain in Hopeka.

An hour behind them, the raging Half Mouth pursued swiftly; but the fury of the elements aided the whites and their party. To the accompaniment of mighty crashes of thunder and blazing flashes of lightning, the fort was occupied.

The battle for the fort and many other interesting events are vividly described in the next installment.

His Neck

A specially attractive story of deep-sea adventure today, by the gifted author of "Outrageous O'Smith."

By RICHARD
HOWELLS WATKINS

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

WHEN one man falls down a hatch another man gets a job.

Kirk Fleming joined the *Marcin* in the Pool. He needed the job, for jobs for young American merchant officers are scarce in London with so many competent Britishers on the prowl. He happened to be in the right place at the proper moment, so he got it.

Even after he had seen the *Marcin* he was glad that he had a job. The only thing that puzzled him was how the second mate, whose berth he took, had managed to fall down the hatch without falling on through the bottom of the ship.

It wasn't so much that her ancient plates were honestly rusting away as that she was—moldering's the word—moldering away. The whole dirty, lumpy little tramper was moldering into dust, as if she had been a cardboard ship in the first place. Kirk had never seen anything like it and he had seen things on several seas.

In that unholy process of dissolution her master was included. Captain Sherwood was old—a wrinkled, ash-gray man who clung to the rail of his bridge for support.

Upon his new second mate he bent a weary smile, clasped his hand in kindly fashion and then turned his remote, withdrawn eyes back to the next reach of the river. His every movement gave an impression of supreme effort—of a will to accomplish, striving against insurmountable physical difficulties.

"Been in 'er twenty years, Cap'n Sherwood 'as, sir," the garrulous, flat-faced steward informed Kirk Fleming as he

or His Ticket



"'E's—'e don't answer!" the steward cried, in a queer falsetto tone. "'E's unconscious! Mister!"

served him later in the dingy messroom. The *Marcin* was slogging down the river with a vibration that seemed to Kirk likely to shake every last rivet out of her. She was in ballast.

"Now 'e's taking her out to the West Indies. 'E'll come 'ome passenger—and she'll go into service somewhere among the islands, sir."

Kirk Fleming nodded. He knew that the *Marcin* was bound for Barbados for orders and he was reckoning with some interest her chances of getting that far. Unless there was steel under that mold she might not. The North Atlantic has its whimsies in November.

It was the *Marcin's* mate who really gripped—unfavorably—Kirk's attention. The mate did not share the decrepitude of ship and master. Like Kirk, he was new that voyage, and he had greeted Kirk with a smile that was sudden, like the snapping on of an electric light. A handsome, deep-chested young fellow, pleasingly brown of hair, eyes, and weathered skin, quick in movement and hearty in manner, was Steve Laska.

Kirk distrusted him,—quick smile, mellow voice, sun-tanned skin, big chest,—all of him. He was too good to be true as mate of a scrap-heap like this one. With his manner and ability Mr. Laska should have been further along

in his profession. Also his eyes moved too fast, and when they fell upon the master of the *Marcin* there was something like secret, unholy mirth in them.

"We'll see," Kirk Fleming muttered, a little later that day. He was on the bridge then—lee side—staring down at Laska on the fore deck. Officially Laska was there for a purpose as the *Marcin* wound laboriously around the bends in the somber stream, but actually he was talking to the owner.

THE owner was new to the craft too, and for some reason was steaming down the river on her as far as Gravesend, where the pilots were changed. Kirk Fleming liked the owner less than he liked Steve Laska, which was considerable. The master of the ship's destiny was a fat, squat little man, bent of shoulder and short in the left leg. His narrow, jutting chin tended to meet his pendulous nose, and his light blue eyes were strange in the darkness of his sallow face. Kirk put him down as the product of some eastern Mediterranean country with just a dash of northern European blood in him.

As for the rest of the ship's company, they were; a non-entity for a chief engineer and a child for a second; the usual hapless crowd forward, with a likely

young sailor or two. Nothing unusual—nothing at all.

The leaden sky had grown black by the time the *Marcin* checked her way off Gravesend to shift pilots. As the Jacob's ladder went over her side Kirk came upon the owner and the mate again, close to the rail under the shadow of one of the boats. They were whispering; and with them, head bent low over his bony shoulders, was Norstrom, the tall bos'n.

Steve Laska jumped away and snapped an order at Norstrom as he caught a glimpse of Kirk in the gloom. Norstrom started, and glanced at the American second mate too, before he repeated the order and slouched away.

"The devil's laying eggs," Kirk muttered to himself, as he passed unswervingly. "Stand by for trouble!"

Sherwood, that gray ghost of a sea-captain, was still on the bridge with the pilot as the *Marcin's* thrashing screw quickened its beat again after dropping the squat owner. She slid on down the river. Her master's frail hands clung to the rail as if only his clutch held him to the earth. The steward brought him coffee and he drank it tremulously.

In his watch below, sitting on his bunk with a pipe to spur his brain, Kirk Fleming speculated upon the possibilities. From the sea roundabout the *Marcin*, like hollow-voiced oracles of trouble, came the blare of foghorns from a dozen ships groping for the mouth of the Thames. . . . Perhaps Kirk had smelled trouble when no trouble was brewing. But that clandestine meeting of mate, bos'n and owner needed explanation.

IT came sooner than he had expected—next morning. Out in Dover Straits with South Foreland abeam and a fine morning breeze sweeping away the gray mist, Kirk relieved the mate on the bridge. Instead of diving below at once, after the manner of mates, Steve Laska lingered. He had a trick of pulling at the lobe of his left ear and his smile clicked on and off with strange rapidity.

"The old man is ailing," Laska said suddenly. "I'm wondering if he'll last out the voyage."

Kirk shrugged his shoulders noncommittally. "There's more life in many an old one than you'd think," he said.

Laska soberly nodded agreement, as if the junior mate had said something profoundly wise.

"But Mr. Barron told me he was ill as well as old," he went on, after star-

ing a moment at the line of undulating chalk cliffs to starboard.

"Barron?"

"Our owner—the old boy who left at Gravesend," the mate explained. "He was giving me instructions—in case anything should happen to the master."

Kirk tramped back to the wheel for a look at the binnacles, but Laska still remained on the bridge. Patiently he waited for Kirk to return.

"He was set on making this last trip in her—Sherwood was—and Mr. Barron was too good-natured to refuse him," Laska explained.

THE unholy face of the owner recurred to Kirk Fleming. "It's hell to be good-natured," he said flippantly.

Laska stared; his hand groped for the lobe of his ear again. "Barron even told the bos'n to keep an eye on the old man," he muttered. "What d'you think o' that? The bos'n! Shows how much Barron knows about ships."

"Oh, that's what the owner was telling the bos'n at Gravesend?" Kirk remarked, innocently enough. "Do you know, I was wondering."

"That was it," Laska replied, nodding emphatically. With no further word he swung down the ladder.

Kirk Fleming did a restless turn or two across the scant length of the *Marcin's* bridge, reflecting upon Laska's unsolicited explanation of that furtive conference in the shadow of the boat.

"I must be looking more half-witted than usual," he growled. "Unloading a tale as bald as that on me! It's an insult! I'll watch 'em!"

In the wheelhouse he paused to stare with a certain interest at a chart that the mate had left on the table, held flat by parallel rulers and dividers. It was the detail chart of the Scilly Isles.

"What's that for?" Kirk murmured.

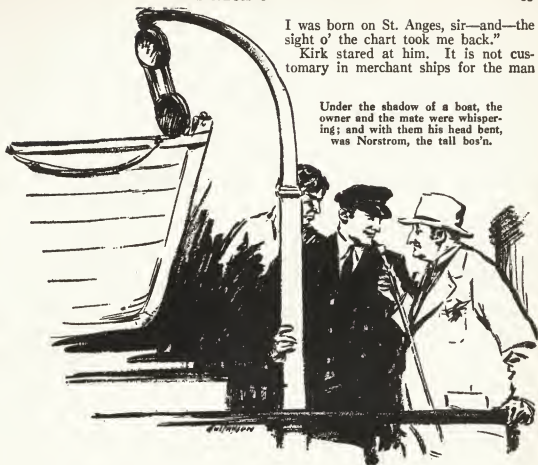
"What's a man to do with the Scillies on a fine morning in Dover Strait?"

He leaned over the table and gazed at the forty islets and the thousand rocks that lie in wait for shipping at the very mouth of the English Channel. Even looking at the chart, with the sea speckled with soundings roundabout and among the granite, was enough to give a seaman the shivers. Those rocks had ripped open more bottoms and ground the life out of more sailors than any other rocks in the world. Since the days of venturesome Phœnician galleys they had been at it—and they still pursued their trade.

I was born on St. Angles, sir—and—the sight o' the chart took me back."

Kirk stared at him. It is not customary in merchant ships for the man

Under the shadow of a boat, the owner and the mate were whispering; and with them his head bent, was Norstrom, the tall bos'n.



But Scilly, for the crawling *Marcin*, was two days ahead. Moreover Laska had no reason to agonize over the details of their cruel snares on a chart; it was a simple matter, barring fog, to give the group a wide berth to starboard. Nobody needed a chart to clear the Scillies. More mystery!

Kirk Fleming suddenly became aware that the helmsman's attention was fixed upon him, not upon the compass card. He remained immobile, with his head bent over the chart, observing that intent regard of the sailor out of the corners of his eyes. What was the reason for it? Ordinarily an officer studying a chart would not be an object of interest to the man at the wheel. What sort of ship was this on which the bos'n conferred with the owner and the helmsman spied on the second mate?

Quickly Kirk straightened up and strode silently to the binnacle. The ship was squarely on her course.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

"Penberth, sir."

The young sailor's tone was respectful, but his dark eyes were strange.

"I—I—just gave a look at 'em, sir," he blurted out. "Scilly's my home—

at the wheel to indulge in sentimental conversation with the officer of the watch. The seaman ceased to speak and turned his glance back to the binnacle.

Carefully the second mate looked him over. He was a short, chunky fellow of perhaps twenty-one, and he stood steadily enough on his feet. But there was something feverishly bright about his eyes.

"You're not drunk," Kirk said abruptly. "What is it that's the matter with you?"

"She's on her course, sir, and has been," the sailor muttered. "I—I'm fit for duty, sir."

The second mate touched the man's head. It was a trifle hot.

"It's—my finger, sir," the helmsman said hoarsely. He raised his left hand and exhibited a middle finger that was swollen almost to bursting at the tip. "I can't sleep, sir."

Kirk nodded, not entirely pleased at this simple solution of this latest mystery. A finger at that stage of infection would explain a bit of light-headedness or fever. Kirk knew that the wringing, burning pain of it was enough to make any man feel and act a trifle queer.

"You've got a felon," he said. "It's about ripe, too. Been to the Captain?"

Penberth shook his head. An appeal to that wraith of a man for surgery was ridiculous.

"The mate, then?"

"No, sir. Don't send me from the wheel, sir; 'tis no worse here than 'twould be below. I—I can't sleep, sir."

"Come to my room after this watch and I'll see what I can do," Kirk said. "Meanwhile—your wheel."

"Aye, sir," said the Scillonian. His burning eyes dwelt upon the officer; then they dropped to the compass again.

Kirk paced out his trick, wondering whether it was his own imagination or the other man's fever that had made that final stare seem odd. Once he returned to the table to study that chart of the Scilly Isles. He found no mark of any sort upon it. He did not speak to Penberth again.

LATER on Captain Sherwood dragged himself out upon the bridge with the steward, bearing a chair, behind him. The master nodded to Kirk and sat down in the weather wing of the bridge, silent and remote, unmoving save when the steward brought him coffee.

When Mr. Laska relieved Kirk—it was watch and watch on the *Marcin*—the second mate went below to find Penberth waiting outside his door.

In the galley Kirk sterilized a small-bladed knife in boiling water and washed his own hands carefully in strong soap. Then, returning to his room, he lanced the young sailor's finger to the bone. He worked with a ruthless kindness. By the time he had finished and bound up the finger the Scillonian was as gray of face as the old master of the *Marcin*. Kirk managed to get him a drink without recourse to the Captain.

"Thank 'ee, sir," the man said gratefully as he gulped down the glass. "I'll be going, sir."

But at the door he lingered, uncertain, yet unwilling to go. "There's talk in the fo'c's'le," he muttered. "Talk about how the other second fell down that hatch—just fo'c's'le talk, sir."

"What kind of talk?" Kirk demanded.

Penberth moved a hand in a vague gesture. "Whether it was an accident, sir. But the talk's maybe because the owner and the mate wanted the old man—the Cap'n—to sail without a second. The bos'n—he has a second mate's ticket—was to stand the second's watch, sir.

But the master wouldn't stir out o' the Pool without another officer, sir."

He ceased to speak but Kirk remained sternly silent. The man deserved punishment for this babbling, but Kirk could not bring himself even to voice a reprimand.

"Just talk—most likely," Penberth repeated and unsteadily left the state-room.

"Talk! I'm not alone in thinking the *Marcin* a queer ship," Kirk mused.

When he took the bridge again the chart of the Scillies was gone from the table. But his feeling that there was trouble coming was intensified. He was conscious always of the mate's eyes and the bos'n's eyes covertly upon him, estimating him, studying him. And once he caught the tall bos'n intently appraising the mate. This was a ship of shifting glances and hidden thoughts. Kirk carried on his duties punctiliously while the *Marcin* throbbed on down the widening Channel, and waited imperturbably.

"It's their move—let 'em go to it," he told himself cheerfully. "Damned if they're not the sort that makes righteousness a pleasure."

To him it seemed that there could be only one move—an attempt by Laska to sink the *Marcin* or pile her on some convenient rock where she would be a total loss. How much she was insured for, and why the underwriters should venture to insure such a craft, were questions not for him to consider. Kirk had long since quit wondering over the actions of landmen. They would risk a dollar any time to earn a cent and by some legerdemain they invariably saved their dollar too.

It was not for the underwriters that Kirk intended to risk his neck and his ticket. He had an urge to beat Laska; that—and perhaps to save old Captain Sherwood from the disgrace of a lost ship on his last voyage.

One thing he knew. Underwriters are skeptics. They do not open their check-books and pour out gold without question when some rusty old skillet goes down. The wrecking of the *Marcin* must be done artistically if profit were to accrue to her squat owner and to Mr. Laska. For advance signs of that artistry he must keep his eyes open.

ONLY once that first day in the Channel did Laska become confidential with his junior. Then he took occasion to express the opinion that the ship's master was doing himself little good by

exposing himself to the chill autumn winds on the bridge.

"Bad—he looks bad to me," the mate said, shaking his handsome head. His eyes, scornfully fixed upon the still figure in the chair, did not reflect the concern in his voice. His left hand drifted up to the elongated lobe of his ear. "I'd hate to see anything happen to the old codger."

"You're more scrupulous than some mates," Kirk answered casually.

"What do you mean?"

"You can't get away with it, Laska," Kirk said softly. "—with murder or without. . . . Better head her due south!"



"Command's a great temptation to some of 'em."

Laska laughed. "I'm not spending my life at sea, Mister," he said. "What's command of an old wagon like this to me?"

Kirk digested that. What was command—command of anything that floated—to a mate? How long had Mr. Laska's master's ticket faded in his pocket?

"What does he want—more than command?" he asked himself with a grim curl of the lips. "And what's a chart of the Scillies got to do with the young fellow's itch for a life ashore? We'll see—aye, we'll see."

He surveyed with direct glance the feeble obstacle in the way of a command for Steve Laska. The master of the *Marcin* was standing now, with that tell-tale clutch of thin hands on the rail, studying with shrewd intensity a fog-bank that was slowly striving to drag its blank whiteness over the gray sea. Kirk sensed anew the effort that it cost the old man merely to stand there.

Like all junior officers of the merchant service Kirk Fleming had a hot intolerance for doddering old fools who clung too long to the weather side of the bridge. Command is no office for the lean and withered pantaloon. Yet the sporting blood in him sided with old Sherwood, for the man's body patently had worn out before his mind and he strove now to do the impossible, to maintain alike control over a torpid body and a rotting ship.

"More than a dying body and a dying ship are lined up against him," Kirk re-

flected, as the ship plowed into the moist, chilling fog.

Even a hulk with scrap-metal engines will consume distance if you give it time enough. Next morning the *Marcin* had the Isle of Wight abeam and still slogged on through the gray November Channel seas, with a patch of fog now and then for variety. And that night she crawled

past the sweep of the Lizard and on toward Land's End. Twenty-six miles southwest of that massive headland lay the Scillies. The *Marcin* had not raised them when Kirk relieved the mate at the end of the morning watch.

Mr. Laska left the bridge at once but remained on deck, staring ahead. Norstrom, the tall, glum-faced bos'n, loitered near the mate until a scowl from Laska drove him away.

IT was a fine morning with a moderate breeze from ahead. The visibility was exceptionally good for that time of year and the seas rolling under the *Marcin* gave her no more than a regular pitch and scend.

Kirk Fleming hummed contentedly as he paced the bridge and grinned at the back of the mate.

"Poor weather for wrecking ships," he murmured to himself. Then, to Penberth, who was taking his trick at the wheel: "How's the finger?"

The youngster grinned gratefully. "Better, sir; the heat's gone out of it, and most o' the pain too."

Kirk nodded. "I'll take a look at it after this watch, when we're beyond the Bishop."

He glanced ahead, toward the horizon. Somewhere below that meeting of sky and sea lay the great lighthouse that is the landfall of all ships bound for the Channel from across the Atlantic. The light guards the outermost rocks of Scilly



Clutching arms enveloped Kirk suddenly. Norstrom! "Hold him!" Laska cried. "I'll stop his—" Kirk saw Laska's hand raise the gun.

and it would be on the *Marcin's* quarter or astern before this forenoon watch—his watch—was over. Beyond that tall stone torch was only the sea—and Barbados.

Penberth kept the *Marcin* steadily on her course. Eventually the green and granite isles, rock-girt, that were Scilly, rose into sight on the starboard bow. And with them rose the tall spire of the Bishop, that stern churchman of the sea.

Kirk Fleming paced the bridge. There was always the bridge to be paced while a man waited. It began to seem to him that he waited in vain. Nothing untoward happened and the Scilly Isles were slipping by.

Laska was restless that morning. He roved about the ship, but avoided the bridge. Only twice in the forenoon watch did he come up to stare at the steady barometer.

"A fine day for November," Kirk remarked politely, at one of these visits.

The mate flung a sulphurous glance at the cumulus clouds in the bright blue sky before growling out his assent. He clattered down the bridge ladder then and

continued his purposeless roaming. But always his feet seemed to bring him to the starboard side of the ship and always his eyes strained toward the Isles.

Captain Sherwood, with a trifle less of that straining supreme effort that marked every movement, came out upon the bridge and dropped into his chair. It was as if the broad stretch of the Atlantic ahead had somehow revived the old man. The fogs and traffic of the Channel were astern; the ocean opened its broad arms to him once more. He sipped his coffee now with relish, as if it were a drink instead of a medicine.

After dinner it was Laska's turn to tread the bridge. And it was Kirk's time to watch in secret. His room was on the starboard side and he spent most of his watch in his bunk with his pipe in his mouth and an eye to the porthole. He had little expectation of trouble in that fine weather. And steadily the *Marcin* plodded past the Isles, and slowly she sank them into the blue sea astern.

"More waiting," Kirk thought, going back to the bridge. "If Laska can't slam her into the Scillies, what *will* he do?"

The dull routine of the ship went on and the sun buried itself in the eye of the wind and the sea to southwestward. The fair day was over and all convenient rocks were astern.

Night dropped down on the *Marcin* and with it came a mist. The southwest wind dropped away to nothing and the ship nosed her way through lazy dying head seas that barely raised her bow. Soon it became a black world, save for the shaded glow of the binnacle lamp in the chartroom.

Kirk Fleming kept the first watch but the shadowy figure of the old master in his chair filled the starboard wing of the bridge. Twice Sherwood heaved himself painfully to his feet and stood in silence, listening, as the wail of some lost steamer rose above the rumblings of the engine. The steward plied him with coffee every hour.

At four bells, when he should have been sunk in profound slumber for the ordeal of the mid-watch, Steve Laska came noiselessly up the bridge ladder. Kirk Fleming faced him warily.

"The old man ought to be in his bunk," Steve Laska whispered. The lowered voice vibrated strangely in Kirk's ears, like the thin note of a cornet. The hair on his head rose. It was an eerie thing, that tense suppressed tone in the misty darkness.

"He'll kill himself before we're off soundings, Mister," the mate murmured on. "I'm going to try to reason with him."

The steward came up the ladder then, bearing the inevitable cup of coffee for the master of the ship. Laska stood beside the silent second mate, waiting, until the man had come and gone. Then he stepped over beside the chair.

UNCERTAINLY Kirk moved nearer to that end of the bridge. He could see only the vaguest outline; hear nothing but the lowest murmur of voices. And then Laska straightened up, and moved away from his commander.

"Stubborn as a mule," he muttered, pausing beside the second mate. "Thinks he has the only eyes and ears aboard. Well—"

His shoulders moved beneath the oilskins in a perceptible shrug and he went on down the ladder. Kirk resumed his pacing. His eyes were as often on the silent figure in the chair as they were on the impenetrable murk forward. Sherwood drank his coffee; pulled himself

erect for an instant to listen with absorbed intensity to some real or fancied noise ahead and then sank back into his chair again. The long minutes of the watch dragged on.

IT was sometime after six bells that the steward came up again. Kirk saw him bend over the man in the chair; heard the murmur of his voice, low—and louder. Then, suddenly, came the crash of crockery on the planking.

"E's—e don't answer!" the steward cried, with a queer falsetto note. "E's unconscious! Mister!"

Kirk Fleming leaped toward the wing. The steward was right. Sherwood, slumped back in his chair, was in a stupor too deep to be normal sleep.

Kirk blew his whistle, and when the messenger came—it was Penberth—ordered the master carried to his cabin.

"See what you can do, steward, until the mate comes," he commanded. "Penberth, call Mr. Laska as soon as you've helped the steward down with him."

He waited on the bridge, with compressed lips, thinking hard. Steve Laska was not long in turning out, nor did he remain a great time in the Captain's room. Soon he came out on the bridge and stood beside Kirk, staring ahead into the misty night and fingering his ear.

"I'm no doctor, I don't know what this is—but I'd say it was serious," he said. "And I've my orders—Barron was afraid something might happen to the old boy."

"Orders?" Kirk Fleming repeated sharply. "You mean that our owner anticipated something like this?"

"Not anticipated; just—in the contingency," Laska explained.

The second mate moved impatiently at this quibbling and Laska, glancing quickly toward him, went on:

"Barron seemed to fear the old man might crack up—he was worrying about it just before he went down the ladder off Gravesend. And"—Laska laughed ruefully—"he hadn't overmuch confidence in me. If anything happened in the Channel, or within reasonable distance—I was to put into the nearest port—for orders."

"The nearest port—for orders," Fleming repeated slowly. "You mean—you'll put back at once?"

"Owner's orders," Laska said sharply. "Of course I'll put back. If Sherwood comes to again—if this is nothing but a faint—that's different. Meanwhile—"

He stepped into the chartroom and spoke to the helmsman. The man put

down the wheel. Kirk felt the *Marcin* turning sluggishly under him. He was remembering that chart of the Scilly Isles—and Laska bending over the Captain's chair.

"That coffee-cup—the steward had just brought it up," he reasoned quickly. "Sherwood had it in his hands—and Laska was close to him. Later the old man drank it—and then he passed out."

He took a step toward the chartroom and then stopped. The mate was standing beside the man at the wheel, watching him steady her on the new course. Laska was master now—and any interference with his orders was mutiny.

Kirk Fleming's lips twisted in a sour smile. "Mr. Laska's won a trick—or my imagination's running wild," he said to himself. "Scilly's ahead now—and we'll be close aboard before it's fairly light. And a fog, too!"

He tightened his lips. "Mr. Laska has certainly won a trick—but he hasn't won the game yet."

HE waited until Laska came to him from the chartroom.

"See if you can do anything to bring the old man to," the mate said. "Then go below and get some sleep. I'll need you later."

"Where will you put in, sir?" Kirk asked stiffly.

"Scilly—if it's not too thick," Laska paused to let his junior speak; then went on: "There's a telegraph station and a doctor on St. Mary's—and there's plenty of shelter in the roadstead. If not Scilly, then Penzance or Falmouth."

Kirk nodded. What good were words?

Laska moved toward the engine-room speaking-tube. "You're relieved," he said. "It may take both of us to get her in if this fog hangs on."

In the Captain's room Kirk found the flat-faced steward hanging helplessly over the motionless figure of the old man on the bunk. Kirk needed only a glance to assure himself that Sherwood was in a deep, helpless stupor.

While he stood there staring at the unconscious master of the *Marcin* the ship stirred to quicker life. Her engines were pulsing more rapidly beneath him: Laska had ordered more speed.

Hastily he went out on deck and aft to the patent log. There with his flashlight on the dial he read off the distance she had made and did a bit of hasty calculating. With Laska pushing her she would approach the Scillies well before

dawn. The mate was driving her toward that granite graveyard of the sea at the best speed she could make.

"And he's got his excuse, too—the master gravely ill," Kirk muttered. "He's staging it right—making it plausible."

For a few minutes he leaned against the taffrail in the darkness, thinking. He stood indeed between the devil and the deep blue sea. Laska was master. Kirk's own evidence in a court of law might possibly ruin the plan of owner and mate to profit by the wrecking of the *Marcin*. But that would be later—after old Sherwood had lost his ship and ingloriously closed his career as a seaman and after Laska had carried out his share of the plot.

Kirk Fleming straightened up. In the darkness before him he heard the scrape of feet on the iron deck and then made out dimly a man's figure approaching.

"Who's that?" he demanded softly.

The approaching man halted. "Penberth, sir," said a low voice. "Any orders, sir?"

For a moment Kirk did not answer. That question could only mean that this young fo'c's'le hand suspected something. Evidently that chart of Scilly, the fo'c's'le talk about his predecessor's fall down the hatch and perhaps some other queer incidents had made him think.

"Yes," he answered. "I want you to keep an eye on the bos'n. What do you know?"

Penberth took a step nearer.

"I been watching Norstrom, sir—just now. Rummaging around secretly in the boat on the starboard quarter a couple of minutes ago, sir, as if 'e was getting her ready to lower in a hurry."

"In a hurry?" Kirk repeated. "Get me an ax, Penberth."

"Aye, sir," answered the Scillonian. He was back in a short time.

AFTER sending Penberth ahead as a scout, Kirk made his way to the boat that swung on its davits and climbed into it. The bos'n had gone and no men of the watch were around.

"I'm wondering if Mr. Laska will take a hint," Kirk muttered. He raised the ax and with a powerful swing drove it through a strake of the lifeboat. Again he swung the ax and then, dropping it, jumped down onto the deck. He hurried forward and climbed to the bridge.

Laska whirled at the sound of his feet.

"I regret to report that somebody has staved in the bottom of Number Two

lifeboat, sir," Kirk said stiffly. "It is useless, sir."

Laska's flashlight suddenly glared out in the gloom, directly upon Kirk.

Kirk raised a hand and pushed the flashlight aside. For an instant there was silence between them.

"Yes?" said the mate softly. "Thank you, Mister."

KIRK FLEMING left the bridge. He was wondering if he had made a mistake. That quiet reception of his news was definitely menacing.

The *Marcin* continued to make knots through the black sea toward Scilly. And still the master of the ship lay like a figure of gray wax in his berth while the steward fluttered about aimlessly.

Authority lay there in that berth—too weak to lift a finger, but authority nevertheless. At a word from those bloodless lips Kirk Fleming might be transformed from a lone mutineer to the commander and savior of the ship—but the lips were motionless. . . .

After a fitful turn on deck, Kirk headed toward his own room. He dug into his dunnage for a small blue-black automatic. This was authority too—of a sort. After a brief hunt through his scanty belongings he stopped.

The pistol had gone. Gone! Kirk contrived to grin, nevertheless.

"Thanks for the compliment, Mr. Laska," he whispered.

His hand was on the door when some one knocked. It was young Penberth, with a conspirator's face.

"The mate's got men watching the other boats, sir," he repeated. "And the bos'n—he's watching the men."

Kirk nodded. "How well do you know the rocks around the Scillies?" he asked.

"Like I know my own face, sir," the seaman answered. "I lobstered an' fished among 'em till I was seventeen. But on a night like this'n"—he shook his head,—"no man knows the Scillies, sir, till too close to matter. A wide berth's the only safety."

"Keep your eyes open—and stay away from me," Kirk directed. "If I give you an order opposed to the mate's you'll be carrying it out at the risk of your neck. Remember that."

"Aye, sir," said Penberth quietly.

Kirk paced the deck. He walked through the veils of mist with ears alert and eyes roving. The comfortable weight of a marlinspike dragged at his

pocket, where his automatic might have been. Above his head the whistle of the *Marcin* moaned, at two-minute intervals, like a stricken creature.

At two bells in the morning watch the lookout on the fo'c's'le head reported the boom of the explosive signal from the Bishop lighthouse. There was no sign of the light itself, nor would there be while that black opacity ringed them in.

Kirk listened to the dull thud of the fog signal. Somewhere forward of the beam—that was as close as he could place it. The fog-banks—of different density—were treacherous, playing with the sound and throwing it this way and that.

With quick steps he made his way once more to the Captain's cabin. At the threshold he paused. The steward had propped up the old man's head. Over him bent Steve Laska, holding to the master's lips a glass with a mere inch of colorless liquid left in it. He wheeled at the sound of the opening door and then his derisive smile appeared.

"I'm trying to bring him to, Mister," he said softly. "I need his advice—and I'll need yours. See how that dose affects him—and come up on the bridge in ten minutes."

Deliberately he set down the glass within hand's reach of Kirk and strode past him to the door.

"'E looks better already, sir," the steward babbled to Kirk. "More color, like."

To Kirk there seemed no change in the old man, but he stared long at the glass and smelled the pungent liquid in it without enlightenment. Ahead the Bishop was booming sullenly—and Laska, to all appearances, was attempting to revive the master. Why?

SUDDENLY the solution came to Kirk. The wrecking of the *Marcin* required convincing details to make it ring true ashore. And what man or court would dare suspect trickery or connivance if the ship's master went down with her, clinging to her bridge?

Certainly old Sherwood was the type of seaman to stand by her; life would mean nothing to him with his command at the bottom. And Laska knew that. Therein lay the pith of the scheme. Why had not Sherwood been dismissed by the owner—if he were not to serve some purpose?

"The blasted snake!" Kirk Fleming rasped. "I—I'll— Hasn't the Captain a gun—a pistol?" He snapped the question at the gaping steward.

"Mr. Laska took it, sir," the man answered. His eyes started in his head and his bony hands shook.

"If the skipper comes to, let me know at once!" Kirk commanded. "Tell me! D'you hear? Me!"

He flung out of the room and crashed into Penberth, waiting outside. Kirk halted, staring at the young seaman.

"The bos'n has a pistol, sir—and he's on the bridge!" Penberth whispered. "The mate called him up there."

"Right!" said Kirk. "Now go forward and keep a sharp lookout. Listen to the Bishop—try to place us as well as you can. When you think we're close to danger give me a hail."

"You're going to take command, sir?" Penberth muttered.

"I'm going to make a stab at it," Kirk answered grimly. "But not till the last moment—I'd rather scare him out of it."

"Good luck, sir!" whispered the seaman. He turned away, but Kirk gripped him suddenly by the shoulder.

"Penberth!" he said. "That's a patent anchor, forward. Easy to let go—pull the locking-pin and knock off the link holding the pelican hook."

"Aye, aye, sir," the sailor said with sudden confidence. "An easy matter, even in the dark."

"Stand by for an order, then."

"Aye, sir."

Kirk turned and ascended the bridge ladder. At the head of it he saw the tall figure of Norstrom. The bos'n backed slowly away. His right hand, Kirk made out, was behind his back.

Kirk ignored him. He walked up to Laska. To his ears came the boom of the Bishop and a shriller, long-continued wail. That would be the fog siren on Round Island, north of the group.

Between those two voices shouting out their warning across the black sea lay a wilderness of granite, a maze of death. Isolated rocks and ledges, first; then low bastions of granite that had defied and thrashed to spray and spindrift the mighty surges of the sea for centuries.

"YOU can't get away with it, Laska," Kirk said softly. "With murder—or without. Better head her due south a bit."

Laska drew closer to him, until his lips were near Kirk's ear. "Yes, Mister?" he murmured. "This is a bad time to lose your head."

"Stow that!" Kirk said brusquely. "I'm telling you I'm onto the game.

Smash her on the rocks and I'll see that you do time for it."

"It's hard to avoid the Scillies," Laska answered smoothly. "The Bishop's signal is so confusing in the fog. One minute you think you're a mile away—and the next—"

A thunderous detonation, borne by some vagrant puff of wind, crashed in their ears, silencing Laska. It leaped out of the blanketing mist from forward of the *Marcin's* starboard beam. And it was close—deadly close. It warned that already the hidden granite was reaching up out of the depths of the dark and silent sea toward the ship's bottom.

Both mates leaped for the engine-room telegraph, but Laska was nearer. He jerked the handle over to "Dead slow." "I'm taking all precautions, Mister," he mocked, "but you're distracting me at a bad time—a bad time!"

From the bows came a hail. "Breakers aport! It's Tearing Ledge!"

Involuntarily both men jerked their heads toward the side. Black water was visible near the ship—then white mist. And where the fog obscured with thickening veils the dark, placid surface of the sea a little curl of white water danced, vanished and danced again. Then it drifted astern.

Laska hung onto the telegraph handle, guarding it. He glanced keenly at Kirk Fleming. "Cover him, Norstrom!" he said. "Let him have it—if he moves."

BESIDE Kirk the bos'n crept closer—until he could jab the muzzle of his automatic into Kirk's ribs.

It was an error, that step forward—for it revealed to the second mate Norstrom's exact location in the dark.

His left hand, moving unseen, knocked aside the muzzle; the right in a powerful swing searched the blackness for the bos'n's jaw. The fist thudded upon flesh—the flesh of Norstrom's neck. He uttered a choked, strangling cry, staggered, caught his heel and crashed backward down the bridge ladder.

"Ledge ahead—it's Gunners!" wailed Penberth's voice, forward, mingling in a yell from the lookout: "Port—port your helm, for God's sake!"

Kirk leaped for the wheel. He brushed aside the paralyzed seaman who clutched the spokes and spun it mightily. The ship was in a nest of rocks but the imminent peril of the Gunners was all that he could strive against. Laska, cursing, was after him in an instant.

"Clear! Stop her!" wailed the voice ahead. "Stop her! Rocks all around!"

Kirk abandoned the wheel to Laska's clutching hands. He thrust solidly at the mate, knocking him aside, and jumped toward the telegraph again.

"Penberth!" he thundered. "Let go the anchor when—"

His reaching hand flung the handle to full speed astern. Forward, with a roar that sounded as if the bow of the *Marcin* was tearing apart, the anchor plunked into the sea and dragged its chain through the hawsehole. The tremendous crash of the heavy links deadened the sound of the screw thrashing wildly astern.

The ship was still going ahead, powerless in the clutch of her own momentum. Her life hung in the balance.

Then, slowly, before any of the granite roundabout touched her tender skin, the *Marcin* lost way.

KIRK, leaning on the telegraph in an agony of suspense, heard Penberth checking the thundering chain cable with the brakes of the windlass.

And still she did not hit. The chain was bringing her up. Kirk brought the handle up to "Stop." His right hand groped for the heavy little marlinspike in his pocket.

The glare of a flashlight leaped into Kirk's eyes. Blinking, he saw that Laska was covering him with the light in one hand and a pistol in the other. Gasping for breath, he yet managed to laugh.

"We're anchored—anchored among the Western Rocks, Laska!" he said. "Heave up; get under way now—and see what your underwriters will say when you claim the insurance!"

"You've still got to save your life!" Laska snarled. "D'you think I'll let you get away with mutiny? You've spoiled my game—Right! I'll spoil your damned—"

Kirk ducked beside the telegraph. A bullet roared over his head. He thrust upward at the mate, swinging his iron spade. It clashed against metal and the pistol, bellowing again, thudded to the planking. Kirk dived for it, but clutching wiry arms enveloped him suddenly. Norstrom!

"Hold him!" Laska cried. "I'll stop his—"

The flashlight the mate still had focused upon the fallen pistol. Kirk struck out with all his might at the clutching

bos'n but the long arms and legs wrapping round him, hampering his movements, smothered the blow. Norstrom was too close to be hurt.

He saw Laska's hand dart toward the gun, grip the butt, raise it to cover his head. Then the flashlight blazed steadily in his eyes.

A pistol boomed; but it was not the pistol in Laska's hand. Vainly Kirk remembered that Norstrom had had a pistol too, and had dropped it somewhere on the bridge. He was not hit.

That vagrant thought was all his brain had time to form, for his attention was all upon Laska. The man was crumpling up. He fell forward on the bridge and a gleam from the falling flashlight revealed that one hand clutched at his chest.

"I've shot him," said a weary old voice. "Release that man, bos'n! You're going in irons! Stand up, Mr. Fleming."

Kirk scrambled to his feet. He knew that age-old voice and he made out dimly the figure of Sherwood, leaning against the bridge rail. That tumult of the anchor chain had roused up the master—it might almost have roused the dead.

"He did try it, after all," murmured the Captain. "I'm not so blind as you think me, Mr. Fleming. But I am not well. Take command, Mr. Fleming. The order is Barbados—for orders. Get her there, Fleming—get her there!"

He slumped suddenly to the deck beside the groaning man with the bullet in his chest. Up the bridge ladder clambered Penberth, with a handspike ready

"Safe enough here till morning—barring a gale!" the sailor gasped. "What do—"

"Put it down, Penberth," said Kirk Fleming. "We've what we need—authority! And we've orders, too. Get her there—and damn the owner!"

WEEKS later, with weary pumps clanking and plates salt-rimed, the *Marcin* was staggering up the unending curve of a blue sea. From a lookout in the stumpy foremast came a hoarse and incredulous hail.

"Land—two points—starboard bow!"

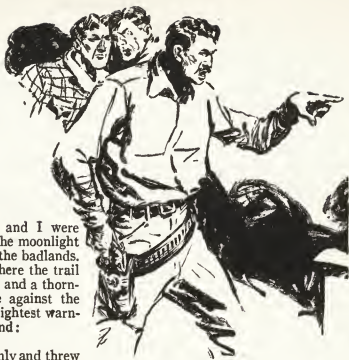
"Done it!" Kirk mumbled. Anxiously he glanced toward the weather side of the bridge.

The steward, with a cup of coffee in his hands, was bending low over a figure, half-buried in blankets in his chair.

"Steward," murmured the old man, "take that wash-away. Bring me—something to eat!"

"I move," Tom Davidson roared, "that we vote this man guilty, take him out and hang him!"

Illustrated by
Peter Kuhlhoff



CHUCK McARTHUR and I were heading for home in the moonlight along a trail through the badlands. We came to a sharp turn where the trail cut under the foot of a bluff, and a thorn-apple thicket pressed close against the wheel-track. Without the slightest warning came the sharp command:

"Halt!"

Our horses stopped suddenly and threw up their heads. My mid-section buckled over the saddle-horn, and my nose came violently in contact with the head-stall of the bridle. With the breath knocked from my lungs, and half dazed from the blow on my nose, I heard a grunt which convinced me that Chuck had suffered much the same fate. Then I straightened up to look down the ugly throat of the meanest-looking single-action .45 I ever saw.

I have no authority to speak for Chuck, but personally I was paralyzed from head to foot. . . . And then a strange thing happened. The gunman, a slender fellow on a bay horse, with a red bandana draped across the lower part of his face, suddenly tucked the gun under his arm, swept off his hat and bowed.

"Gentlemen, I apologize. It's a mistake!"

With that he wheeled his horse and darted behind a clump of trees.

For my part the feeling of relief was immediate. I looked at Chuck, to find him looking at me. His face expressed my own feelings plus a state of wonderment as to what it was all about. Without the corroboration of his puzzled expression, I should have had only the evidence of a nose-bleed that this was not a dream.

Suddenly he came to life. His horse leaped ahead, and mine followed until we were clear of the brush. Neither of us carried six-shooters, but Chuck's rifle sprang from its scabbard beneath his leg. When we got in the clear, there was nothing to see but a moonlit valley winding

through scoria-tipped peaks, and a band of timber that widened rapidly as it approached and joined the broader band along the Missouri River.

"What do you make of that!" exclaimed Chuck. "Is that fellow loony?"

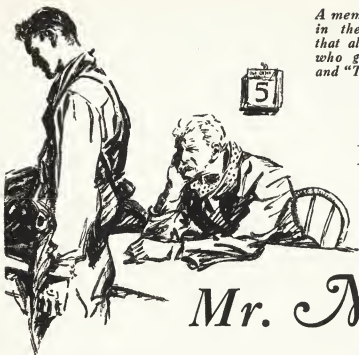
"The Lord knows," I said; "but anyway he apologized and said it was a 'mistake.'"

"Mistake is right," muttered Chuck. "And if this Mister Mistake ever tries that stunt on me again, somebody is going to get hurt."

I was just a kid at the time, working for old Bill Dailey of the 4X. For lack of any special qualifications I was attached to Chuck McArthur, the range boss, as a sort of aide-de-camp. We were constantly in motion from cow-camp to steer-camp, from steer-camp to hay-camp, thence to the home ranch and out on the trail again. We slept anywhere and everywhere, often on the prairie or in the badlands, seldom at home.

It was a wild country. Our protection from the thieving element lurking in the hidden recesses of the badlands, lay in each man's ability to take care of himself, and in the stern but just punishments of a vigilance committee composed of Bill Dailey, representing the 4X, Tom Davidson of the F-bar-F, and his brother John Davidson, owner of the Oarlock.

These men sat in judgment on doers of evil. From them there was no appeal. They took the power of life and death into their own hands, and backed by



A memorable story of wild days in the Dakota badlands, by that alumnus of the old West who gave us "Captain Jack" and "The Last of the Thundering Herd."

By
**BIGELOW
NEAL**

Mr. Mistake

every law-abiding cattleman, carried terror to the hearts of horse-thief and of robber alike. . . .

As we turned toward home I noticed Chuck was strangely silent. Still excited, I felt the need of talk and sought an explanation.

"What's the matter?"

Slowing his horse to a walk, he threw one knee across the animal's neck.

"I don't like it."

"Don't like what?"

"I don't like what's coming."

We were crossing the mouth of Lone Tree Coulee. He pointed to the tree.

I had forgotten where we were. But I remembered, and shivered. There, rising from the level floor of the valley, towering far above acres of wild-rose bushes, was the elm, its mass of green glittering in the moonlight, and one great arm, leafless, branchless and dead, flung out horizontally to cast a beam-like shadow on the ground.

"Remember what happened there?"

I remembered all too well. It was a night such as this. Over there on those stumps of petrified trees sat Bill Dailey and the Davidsons, the committee of three, iron-faced and merciless. Around these three a wall of horses and men, while before the judges stood the man whose name we never knew, but who was called Calico, a murderer and thief and robber—not by accident or imagined necessity, but by instinct, because he would rather steal and kill than not.

And it sickens me yet to think of that shadow we left, swaying back and forth across the banks of wild roses, and to think of our Boss, old Bill, riding white-faced among us and saying:

"Men, I hope our wrong is not greater than his."

Chuck was speaking, and my mind came back to the present.

"This means trouble for the Boss," he said. "He's never got over that last deal. He wants this country to organize and bring in the law. He's been fighting for it for years, and he's just about made it. Now comes another night-riding fool to mess things all up, and to swing people the other way. And this aint the end of it, either. This fool will hatch out a dozen more."

We rode on in silence for a while, and then Chuck burst out again:

"What makes me mad is this pair of Davidsons on the committee. They don't want to pay taxes to support the law, and they'd just as soon hang a man as not. Old Tom, especially! Between you and me, he's nothing but a retired killer himself. His heart's made out of the same stuff as these arrowheads we find in the—"

Suddenly Chuck wheeled his horse at an angle to the way we had come.

"Come on, kid! I see it now. That fellow did make a mistake. He was waiting for the stage."

I could follow Chuck's reasoning. The stage was due and already half an hour late at the scene of our hold-up. Chuck

had evolved the idea of taking a short-cut through the badlands, over a cattle trail impossible for vehicles, bringing us back on the scene from the north, a direction from which the highwayman would not be expecting an interruption. If Chuck's reasoning were correct and the robber waited for the stage after we had left, we should catch him unawares.

IT was a wild ride, in some respects the wildest I ever made, for even in moonlight the badlands is no place for racing. We sped along a narrow-walled cañon where the hoofs of our horses rang out sharply on the hard-packed clay. Then we were in a wider valley where the clay gave way to blue-white alkali and the drumming softened while twin ribbons of smokelike dust hung on the air behind us. We scaled the side of a hogback and plunged down the opposite slope. With undiminished speed we threaded our way through a forest of petrified trees, across more alkali and clay, jumped ditches and washouts and on into a boulder-strewn cañon where the wild leaps and lunges of our horses made bronco-busting seem tame. Then just short of a turn in the cañon, Chuck pulled his horse to a sliding halt, and we left both animals tied in the heart of a thicket.

Hurrying ahead on foot, cautiously now because the scene of the hold-up lay just around the bend, we came to the sharp corner of a clay butte. Peering around it, we saw a team and spring-wagon, a woman on the front seat, her face averted and her hands in the air. On the ground stood a man, his coat and trousers in a pile before him, his hands also upstretched, and the tails of his shirt fluttering in the breeze. Between him and us was our man "Mistake," a gun-belt and holster looped over his arm.

A glance at Chuck caught a grim smile playing about his features, and I heard the breech of his rifle close with a sharp click. Looking back to the group, I could scarcely repress a gasp of astonishment when I recognized the towering figure in baggy underwear: it was Tom Davidson!

The outlaw dropped a vest to the pile on the ground. We saw him raise his hand and throw some object in the face of Davidson. Then he wheeled and came in our direction. Halfway to us, he dropped Davidson's gun-belt to the ground, and we saw sparks fly as the big .45 glanced from a rock. Then Chuck stepped out full into the moonlight, his rifle leveled.

"Stick 'em up, boy," Chuck ordered. "You're all through!"

The outlaw's horse skidded to a stop in a cloud of alkali dust.

"Don't reach for a gun," commanded Chuck. "Just unbuckle your belt and let it drop."

The bad-man obeyed. But his hand trembled so he could scarcely master the buckle. As he dismounted at another command from Chuck, and held up his hands, we saw that he trembled from head to foot. Then Tom Davidson, in full possession of his pants and his gun, was upon us. He was a beast in any degree of anger, and I had never seen him so mad in my life.

Jamming his gun into the outlaw's ribs, he turned to me.

"Cut a tie-string from his saddle."

I obeyed.

"Chuck, you tie his hands behind his back."

Chuck did so.

AT that, Davidson drew back and struck savagely, and with all his strength, driving a brute of a fist up under the outlaw's chin, lifting the fellow clear of his feet and stretching him on the ground. As he struggled groggily to his knees, Davidson grasped the rope on his saddle and tore it loose from its strap. Throwing the noose over his victim's head, he gave it a cruel jerk, bringing the outlaw staggering to his feet. Then Davidson set out along the cañon floor, dragging the stumbling figure after him. We followed, Chuck leading the outlaw's horse.

If we had the slightest doubt as to Tom Davidson's intentions, it was dispelled when we reached the nearest tree. Davidson's arm revolved in the moonlight, and the rope shot like a striking snake up and over a projecting limb. Leaping for the free end, he sat back with all his might. At that, the outlaw's knees buckled under him and he collapsed; nor could Davidson pull the rope over the rough bark with power enough to accomplish his deadly purpose. Cruel as a man could be, maddened beyond sanity, Davidson was actually foaming at the mouth.

"Get hold, here," he bellowed to us. "What the hell you standing there for?"

"Listen, Tom," protested Chuck. "Let's wait until the committee gets a chance to—"

With a snarl, more beast than human, before we could think or act, Davidson lunged past us and leaped to the back of the outlaw's horse. Flipping the rope in

a double turn about the horn, he jabbed his spurs in the animal's ribs. For my part, I stood there paralyzed with horror. I saw the rope whip tight, and the outlaw sliding along the ground toward the awful limb. I heard him gasp and cry out in a terrible fear. Then a bright flash leaped from beside me, a sharp report rang along the cañon and I saw Davidson's mount collapse as if struck by a bolt of lightning.

Now Davidson was clear out of his senses. His face was that of a maniac. Leaping from the fallen horse, he swung toward us, reaching for his gun. But he came to a sudden halt, his hand frozen in midair when he found himself looking down the cold blue barrel of Chuck's rifle. "That'll do, Tom," said Chuck; and I shall never forget the only time I ever saw Chuck McArthur really dangerous. His voice was as gentle as if he were speaking to a child, but there was a quality in it I never had heard before, a deadly note which permitted no misunderstanding, no hesitation and no denial. "That'll do, Tom," he repeated. "One move toward that gun, and I'll drop you cold in your tracks."

Tom Davidson was beaten. Like all cruel men, like all great bullies, he was craven at heart.

"Aw, shucks, Chuck, don't get all het up over—"

"Shut up and turn your back!"

Again there could be no denying the deadly seriousness in McArthur's voice, and Tom Davidson obeyed. I saw him tremble, and I'll not deny that I was taking a savage delight in this part of the spectacle. Chuck's tone had grown a trifle metallic.

"There will be a committee meeting tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. We'll see that our bad-man is there. Meanwhile you strike out for your team, and if you want to live until you get there, don't open your mouth or turn around on the way!"

Five minutes later, the outlaw and I on my horse, Chuck following and covering us with the rifle, we left the valley and the stiffening form of the robber's horse to the quiet of a moonlight night.

The committee met at the 4X, grizzly-headed Bill Dailey as usual acting in the capacity of presiding officer. He sat at a battered table with one boot-heel hooked in a round of his chair, his hat tipped forward over bushy white eyebrows and the back of his head clasped in his fingers. On his right and left were Tom and John Davidson. Tom, his jaw set until the muscles bulged savagely across his cheeks, glared about the room as if everyone



"Gentlemen, I apologize. It's a mistake!" And he wheeled his horse and darted away.

present were guilty of crimes unmentionable. John Davidson, a characterless replica of his stern and savage brother, was there merely as a yes-man to Tom.

Riders had carried the news far during the night, and the room was filled with men representing every cattle outfit for miles around. When I squeezed through the crowd and found a seat on the floor by Chuck McArthur, old Bill Dailey was speaking.

"Gentlemen, there's two ways of going about this. I—"

"That's it, exactly," interrupted Tom Davidson; "there's two ends to a rope."

"No, Tom, I didn't mean that," resumed the chairman. "I mean times have changed."

"Maybe so," Davidson broke in, "but horse-thief nature runs pretty true to form. The only way to stop 'em is to string 'em up to the first tree that comes handy."

"For fifty years," went on the chairman patiently, "we've fought this problem alone. We had to. With no telegraph, no telephone, no sheriff and no court within a hundred miles, we had no choice but to take the law in our hands. Personally I don't like it and never did. Our kind of justice—"

"Always was chicken-hearted," muttered Tom Davidson.

"Too doggone much that way," agreed his brother.

"Our kind of justice is the better only to the extent that it is swift; but gentlemen, I've gone on for years wondering about the result if sometime we got the wrong man. What would happen to us? Could we go on here, going about our business as we do now, thinking about something we'd left hanging in a cottonwood, or would we feel so ashamed that we'd crawl off somewhere and hide and maybe wind up hanging to something ourselves?"

"Hell," growled Tom Davidson, "you're growing old and getting soft in the head. For me, I'll take a chance on stringin' up the wrong man, so long as we get the right one before we're done."

BILL DAILEY turned his attention to the figure before his desk—that of a young man with a good-natured but weak face, surmounted by the unruly shock of red hair we had noted before.

"What's your name, young man?"

The outlaw shook his head. "There's a certain party I don't want to know about this. I can't tell my real name, and

I don't want to lie about it." Here he smiled faintly. "Mr. McArthur calls me 'Mistake.' Will that do?"

Dailey did not push the question.

"How did you get started in this hold-up business?"

"I came West to be a pioneer, but when I first got out here, I hired out to a tough outfit."

"Did you know their occupation?"

"The boss said he was in the cattle business."

"Did you understand his angle on the business was dishonest?"

"No sir."

"Do you want to tell us his name?"

"They said they would follow me and kill me if I ever squealed."

Dailey tapped the edge of his desk with a pencil. "Last night you held up two of my men."

"That was a mistake; I apologized."

"Then you held up Mr. Davidson, here."

"That was another mistake."

DAILEY smiled, and a murmur of laughter ran around the room.

"But you held him up and robbed him of his money and clothes, and he tells us you frightened his wife so that she is home sick—"

"That wasn't his wife," interrupted Chuck. "That was the school-teacher from Cottonwood."

"Damn you, Chuck," roared Tom Davidson, "I'll settle with you yet!" But most of his threat was lost in a chorus of laughter.

Bill Dailey sternly demanded silence, and we knew he meant it. He went on with his questions:

"Anyway, you robbed Mr. Davidson?"

"Yes, but I gave him back his money."

"He's a liar," roared Davidson.

"It's the truth," broke in Chuck McArthur. "The kid and I seen him throw it in Tom's face."

Bill Dailey showed unusual interest. "Why did you return his money?"

"Because it wasn't enough."

A fresh wave of laughter ran around the room. Tom Davidson swore savagely, and expostulated:

"You're not going to swallow a yarn like—"

"Quiet here," ordered old Bill Dailey. "It's our business to get at the truth." And he turned again to the outlaw.

"I wish, young man, you would tell us, in your own words, just how you happened to do this."



Looking at the group, I could scarcely repress a gasp of sheer astonishment when I recognized the figure in baggy underwear.

"Yes sir. I got word that a certain party down East was sick and not expected to live—"

"Tell 'em you're in the same fix yourself," snarled Davidson.

"And I had to have money to get there. The men I was with wouldn't give me any. I waited for the stage, and made two mistakes. I gave Mr. Davidson back his money, because it wasn't enough to do me any good."

For a time no one spoke. Tom Davidson fingered the butt of his six-shooter and glared at the offender. Bill Dailey rubbed the eraser of his pencil in circles on his desk. Then he went on:

"Who is this certain party you have mentioned twice?"

"My mother."

I always thought the boss had guessed the answer before he asked the question. Dailey wanted a majority of the men with him, and he knew the value of sentiment. Tom Davidson sensed the value of the answer also.

"Gentlemen," he roared, "I say enough of foolishness. I move, and my brother John seconds the motion, that we vote this man guilty of being a cattle-rustler, a horse-thief and a highway-robber and that we take him out and hang him here and—"

"You're a liar," burst out the prisoner. "I never stole a horse or a cow in my life."

Sometimes you can tell when a man is telling the truth. Without being able to furnish proof, you know. You recognize the truth just as you recognize anger or fear. And three-fourths of the men in that room knew. Dailey dropped the pencil into a drawer.

"Tom," he said, "we're shipping to-morrow, and I'm going to take this young man as far as Chicago and send him home."

Tom Davidson was again on his feet, but Dailey waved him sternly aside.

"He's been in bad company, and he hasn't been good by any means; but the only crime for which he stands even morally convicted is against the Government. The stage is not of the State or of us. He's had a sharp lesson, and I'm going to see that he has a chance."

And in spite of Tom Davidson's roaring and threatening, Dailey stood pat.

THE third night of the drive we stopped at Armstrong's. There, because of the rain, the boss' wife let us bed down on the floor. Chuck and Shorty and Long Tom McKee stayed with the beef-herd until two o'clock in the morn-



ing. Then they came in and went to bed in Armstrong's hayloft, and a new bunch went out with the herd.

The house was chilly. I had to use my extra blanket for cover, and I folded my sweater for a pillow. It was too low. Finally I hitched my head up near a sewing-machine and built a pillow on the treadle.

The fellow we still called Mistake, for lack of a better name, slept next to me. I figured he was pretty tired, because he'd worked hard all day helping drive the cattle.

Along in the night I must have moved my head, because I woke up at a whirr and a clickety-click. Some of the men heard it and thought there were spooks running the machine. While they were whispering among themselves and I lay there snickering, Mistake came in from somewhere and crawled into his blankets.

NEXT morning we were bunched in the house listening to Bill Dailey tell us how to run the herd for the day, when in came Tom Davidson, so mad he was frothing at the mouth.

"Some low-down blank-blank so-and-so stole my pocketbook right out of my overcoat!"

We all stood and looked at each other. Under such conditions each man, whether innocent or not, has an uncomfortable feeling that he is an object of suspicion. It was old Bill Dailey as usual whose mind first cut through the fog. I saw him glance from face to face, and I thought his gaze rested longest on the man we called Mistake. Then he turned to Tom Davidson.

"Where was your coat, Tom?"

"I left it hanging in the hall."

"You're sure you didn't lose it anywhere else?"

"Of course I am. I took it out of my jumper and put it in the overcoat when I hung it up."

"Sounds kind of careless to me," commented Dailey; "but I suppose the thing to do is to search the crowd. Line up, gentlemen. Tom, you search me, and I'll search you. Then we'll go down the line."

Slowly they passed from man to man. Halfway along the line they came to Mistake. Smiling, he put up his hands. They felt of his trousers' pockets and ran their hands over his vest. Then Dailey thrust his hand in a coat pocket. There he seemed to hesitate, and the muscles of his jaw worked convulsively. Then he withdrew his hand, grasping the lost pocketbook.

"That yours, Tom?"

Davidson grabbed the folded leather:

"You're damned right, it is." Swinging, he aimed a savage blow at the face of the stranger.

I had never taken my gaze from the face of Mistake. I saw the smile fade out and a chalky pallor spread over his features. Then I reeled across the room as he dodged Davidson's blow and lunged forward.

The suddenness of his assault was all in his favor. He plowed through the crowd, knocking men right and left. A dozen hands gripped him as he passed, but he tore away. A revolver-butt swung down but missed his head and struck his shoulder. He was through the door.

"Get him, men," roared Tom Davidson. "Plug him full of lead!"

But our numbers were against us. We crowded into the hall, and jammed there so tightly that we couldn't open the door. Thus Mistake gained precious seconds which enabled him to spring on his horse and get out of the yard.

As we finally got the door open and burst out on the porch, a volley of pistol shots rang out. I saw the stranger's horse stagger and swerve, but it might have been from the slippery ground, still sodden under the drizzling rain.

By the time we reached our horses, he was behind a big clump of thornapples. When we thundered around the brush, he was disappearing around the shoulder of a hill. Around him the mud was flying in showers under the impact of bullets from the Davidsons and their gang. I

say *Davidsons*, because old Bill told us not to shoot. "Run him down and catch him alive," yelled Bill, and the boys of the 4X obeyed.

"Fill the skunk full of lead," roared Tom Davidson, and his men were filling the air with bullets.

Turning the hill, we saw him entering a timber-filled coulee leading up to the higher prairie. Halfway up, we found his horse lying dead. We knew we had him then, for the heights on either side were of clay, barren of timber or grass; and the coulee would lead him up to the level prairie where his capture was certain.

Then we saw him. He was working his way up the face of the bluff. Even that was hopeless, but I suppose he thought it would put him on even terms with us, because no mounted man could follow where he led.

He nearly made it, too. When we came abreast of him, he had reached the crest. For an instant he was outlined against the clouds. Then Tom Davidson dropped from his horse and rested his rifle against a tree. Bill Dailey cried to him: "Don't shoot him down like that, Tom—don't! We can—"

But the bullet was on its way. . . .

When we reached him and stood about in a silent, awe-stricken circle, Chuck McArthur joined us, puffing from the long climb. He saw Bill Dailey before he noticed the figure half-hidden by waving grass.

"Say, Bill," he said, "did somebody lose a pocketbook?"

"Yes," said Dailey, and then very soberly: "But we found it again."

"Good!" exclaimed Chuck. "I picked it up off the floor when I came in at midnight for lunch. I put it in a pocket right above where it lay, and just now I got to thinkin' what might happen if I got it in the wrong coat."

"It happened," said Dailey; and his face was whiter than the mist that drifted behind him on the prairie.

I TURNED and looked at Tom Davidson. I wondered if he felt the scorn written so plainly on the faces about him. Now that he had achieved his purpose, I expected to see the old cruel gleam in his eyes, the savage gloating which we had come to know as so much a part of his character. But I received the supreme surprise of my life.

He stood over the huddled form of his victim like a man whose bones had

turned to water. His iron shoulders sagged; his great hands hung limp and trembling; his chin was on his breast and perspiration stood in beads on his brow. I felt a curious thrill in the presence of this phenomenon so new to his merciless character, and it grew to awe as I saw the chalky pallor of his face.

The others also gazed open-eyed and awe-struck. We all felt, I imagine, that we were witnessing the death of something in the soul of a man. And we were right. Somehow, during those few moments, the soul or the heart or whatever you call it, of Tom Davidson underwent a change. As he lifted his head and his gaze met mine, I saw nothing of cruelty, but only the expression of one dazed and mentally hurt. . . . Then the man we supposed dead stirred and gasped for breath. And it was the new Tom Davidson who came to his senses first.

"Quick, men! For God's sake, somebody ride for a doctor!" And turning to me: "Get a saddle-blanket—quick!"

Chuck was on his horse and away. I pulled the blanket from under my saddle. Then we lifted the wounded man as gently as we could, and carried him down the hill.

YES, he recovered. And Tom Davidson never left him until he was on his feet. Later it was Tom who sent him to see his mother, and it was Tom who gave him a job and a chance to earn a little place of his own.

I was south for several years and didn't see Mistake, but I heard he now had a home of his own and was married. . . . One day after I returned, Chuck and I were riding again in the badlands. We came to the top of a high bluff and met big Tom Davidson coming up the other side. After we had shaken hands, Chuck asked:

"How's your bad-man coming, Tom?"

Davidson smiled. And I thought I saw a glint of pride in his eye as he pointed.

"What do you see down there in the coulee?"

"Well," Chuck said, "I see a new log house, what looks like a garden, and a woman hanging out some clothes. Then there's some chickens running around the yard and—what the deuce is that crawling around the house?"

"Doggone," answered Tom,—and again I caught a gleam of pride,—"that's just another little homesteader."

Just a Radio Man



Brannigan shouted, "Put 'em high, Gagger!"—then as guns came out of their pockets, he fired.

By ROY CHANSLOR

IT was young Terry McGlynn's night off and as usual he was looking for trouble. Terry always looked for trouble on his night off. Not the sort of trouble one might expect from his name though, for he wasn't pugnacious or quarrelsome, at least no more so than any other young fellow of twenty-five who happened to be ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths per cent pure Irish.

What young Terry McGlynn was looking for that Monday night, indeed what he had been searching for doggedly, for four long years, was *Crime*.

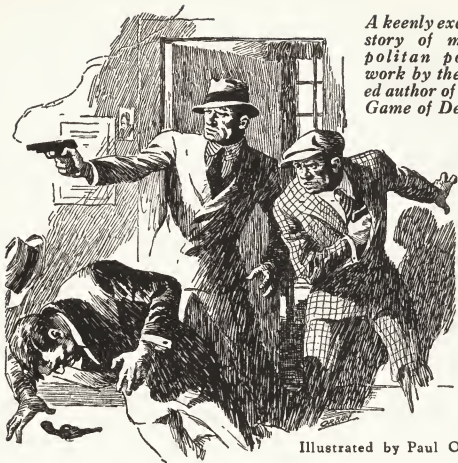
And although he was technically a policeman—he drew a patrolman's pay and rated a service revolver—it was only on his night off that Terry ever had a chance to hunt for crime. For Terry McGlynn walked no beat, nor did he skulk about in plain clothes, an inspector's man, ferreting out evildoers. He was merely a radio operator at police headquarters—a radio telegraph operator; not one of those dynamic fellows who bark terse commands on the short waves to roving radio-patrol cars, but a man who did a routine job in a routine way, sending out

official messages now and then to ships at sea, receiving one occasionally, now and then picking up stray messages—or very occasionally, an S. O. S.

His was the graveyard watch, midnight to eight A. M., and he had been working at it four years, every night but Monday. It was just his luck to have Monday wished on him for his night off, too—Monday, when crime was at a low ebb. It was very discouraging to a young fellow who longed to prove himself in the solution of some spectacular crime, or at least to help make a sensational "collar," so that his most cherished ambition—to be a member of the Detective Division—might be realized.

Six nights a week, for four years, Terry had sat cooped up in that radio-room, while thugs picturesquely bumped each other off, burglars looted safes, kidnapers snatched millionaires' sons, bandits stuck up mail-trucks and armored pay-roll cars, and while stranglers, gunmen, poisoners, hatchetmen, killers of every breed stalked their prey.

But every Monday night, from midnight until dawn, just as if he were on



A keenly exciting story of metropolitan police work by the gifted author of "The Game of Death."

Illustrated by Paul Orban

a regular police tour, young Terry had been on crime's trail, haunting the spots where it notoriously flourished. So far, he'd never caught up with it in any guise more important than an occasional drunken row in a night-club.

Things did happen in those places. He read about them nearly every day; the papers had been full of them all through those last exciting years of the speak-easy era—but always, it seemed to Terry, these things happened on any night but Monday!

Terry McGlynn was gloomily reflecting something of this sort on this night, just after midnight, as he entered the Devil's Inn. He checked his hat and top-coat and morosely followed the head-waiter to a small table, which he had signified as his choice.

He seated himself on the maroon-covered bench which circled the long narrow room and faced the floor. Thus he commanded not only the floor and the main part of the room but the entrance foyer and the wide, maroon-curtained door at the rear, marked Exrr, through which the entertainers came and went. It was a

real vantage-point, the sort he always chose for himself when possible. Nothing that happened in that long room could escape his swift gaze.

Not that anything *would* happen, he thought, as he looked about him. This was just the usual typical Monday night crowd of people, tired after a strenuous week-end, just boredly killing time until they could summon enough energy to mope off to bed.

Terry ordered a club sandwich and a glass of beer. He never drank the hard stuff; he wasn't going to dull his wits with whisky and risk muffing his big chance if it ever did come. He surveyed the scattered couples again. There were three or four fairly tough-looking citizens but Terry knew from experience that most of them took it out in just looking tough.

He wondered bitterly why it was that he never ran into the real thing. It wouldn't have been so bad if he could have made himself believe that it was his presence which kept the really sinister ones away. It would have been something to think that the whisper was out:



Something must be going on behind that curtain! Should he drift back there?

"Play it careful tonight, boys. Take it easy. McGlynn, of Headquarters, is on the job."

Unfortunately, he knew better than this—because nobody at all realized that he was "McGlynn of Headquarters." In fact nobody had ever heard of him. Even the detectives he recognized in his tours of the Broadway sector didn't know him for what he was, a mere radio operator.

But Terry knew all of them by sight: The crack men, the first-grade detectives of the Broadway squad, or o. the strong-arm squad, the gangster squad, the alien squad, the safe-and-loft squad—the tried, picked men, the real man-hunters.

Time and again he'd thrilled as he'd seen one or another of these slip unobtrusively into some shady joint along the bright-light belt; for where men like that were, trouble must be near. Often he'd pictured himself springing forward, gun in hand, to help one of those hardy ones battle it out of a tough spot.

He could envision their report to the Chief Inspector: "The arrest was made possible by the timely and daring intervention of Patrolman McGlynn, who, although off duty and out of uniform at the time—"

But never yet had any of those brawny boys shown the slightest sign of needing young Terry's help. There was just never anything doing when he was around!

And yet, not three months ago, in this very club, Joe Pocatelli, first-grade man of the Broadway squad, had shot it out with three bandits, members of the famous Gagler mob, wanted for jail-break, mail-robbery and murder—had shot it out with them and taken them all, Mort Gagler dead, the others to stand trial for their lives. There wasn't anything Terry owned that he wouldn't have given to have been in on that party.

He even envied Joe Pocatelli the three slugs in his left thigh that had kept him in the hospital these last weeks. . . .

The waiter arrived with the sandwich and the beer. Terry nibbled at the sandwich and sipped the beer, but he never took his eyes off the room. Just because nothing had ever happened yet didn't mean he was going to dog it and miss his chance if it did come.

THAT'S how it happened he spotted Joe Pocatelli, the moment the slim swarthy little detective stepped into the room, though he came in through the maroon-curtained door at the rear. Terry felt his muscles tingle as he covertly watched Pocatelli limp to the table nearest the maroon curtain and seat himself, his back to the wall, just as Terry himself was sitting.

So Pocatelli was back on the job—and still limping! It must be something pretty hot to drag him in from sick leave, in from the hospital, on an apparently dull Monday night. Terry had a heart-warming hunch that his faithful search was going to be rewarded, that at last he was going to catch up with trouble!

A waiter brought Pocatelli a drink, which in truth was the main reason why the detective had dropped in—that, and the possibility of chewing the fat with Danny a couple of minutes. He'd been out of the hospital only a day, but cooped up in a hotel room, he'd got restless, had decided to go over to Danny's and have one ball before turning in.

He looked around for Danny. Terry, watching, saw the dark-haired, slim-hipped manager of the club come in from the foyer, saw him noticeably start with surprise at sight of Pocatelli. Then the manager hurried toward the detective's table. They shook hands and Danny sat down beside Pocatelli.

"Sure good to see you up and around again, Joe," he was saying, while Terry was wondering whether he was friend or enemy to Joe Pocatelli.

"Thanks, Danny," the detective said. "Good to see you, too—and good to be out of the hospital! I sure nearly went screwy in there."

"Anything up, Joe?" Danny asked.

"Not that I know of," said Pocatelli. "I'm still off duty. The Chief says I got to take two more weeks—he wants I should go to Bermuda."

"Sounds like a sensible idea."

"Uh-huh," said Pocatelli. "Guess I'll run down there about Wednesday. I was a little restless tonight, so I thought I'd sneak in and have a ball, and thank you again, kid."

Danny grinned. "Forget it! You've given me all the breaks in the world."

"I always figure a right guy rates the breaks," said Pocatelli. "Anyways, you sure evened things up, kid. I've not only got to thank you for that collar, I guess I got you to thank that I'm limpin' around at all."

"Don't be like that, Joe," said Danny deprecatingly. "Even if I hadn't got Mort Gagler, you'd have taken him."

"Maybe," agreed Pocatelli. "Maybe I'd've took him, Danny; maybe not. Anyways, I get the credit and a sergeant's pay when I get back on the job."

"No foolin'!" said Danny, delighted. "That calls for another ball, Joe."

"Oke," Pocatelli agreed. "But just one; then I go hit the hay."

WATCHING, Terry saw the manager and the detective clink glasses and drink. Then a rather noisy party entered and the manager hurried to meet them.

Terry saw Pocatelli's eyes follow the manager. He wondered if that drink meant they were friends or whether it was just a gesture.

He felt pleasantly excited. He thought of sauntering to the detective's table and saying in a low voice: "I'm McGlynn, Joe. Headquarters. Need any help?"

But immediately he thought better of that. He'd better just stick around, ready to step in and give a hand whenever Joe decided to go into action. Happily he sipped his beer. Then Joe Pocatelli rose, waved a casual farewell toward the manager and quietly left as he had come, through the maroon curtain. . . .

Something must be going on behind that curtain! Should he drift back there and see if he could be any help? He de-

cided not; it might ball everything up. No, the thing to do was sit tight and wait for developments. He reached back and felt the reassuring bulge of his service revolver, the gun he'd never fired except in afternoon target practice on the police range. Well, he was ready. . . .

Meanwhile Detective Pocatelli, feeling pretty tired, in spite of the two drinks, limped down the corridor, past the dressing-rooms where he heard the laughter of girls getting ready for the twelve-thirty floor-show. He limped on, through a door at the end of the corridor and into a long hallway which had an exit on Seventh Avenue. It was closer, that way, to the hotel. He only wanted to get there now and crawl into bed. The Chief was right—he did need a couple more weeks to recuperate.

AT twelve-thirty, in the Devil's Inn, the floor-show began. Terry gazed at the fantastic gyrations of the almost unclad girls with negligible interest. He was sitting tight, waiting, all his nerves tense, trying not to make his observation of the maroon curtain too obvious. Back of that curtain through which these girls had just come was Joe Pocatelli. He might be in danger. It was hard to sit here quietly, with that thought. Yet it was the only smart way to play it.

The girls trooped off the floor, kicking lithely. The lights were lowered and the spotlight went to the maroon curtain. A slim dark girl in a gold-colored gown appeared there suddenly. There was a burst of applause; then she sauntered out onto the floor, the spotlight following her. The orchestra began. Quickly, with a superb and effortless grace, she started to dance, her little feet tapping a mad rhythm.

In spite of himself, young Terry's eyes followed her. She was a new one, to him. Of course he hadn't been here for some time—in fact, not since that night nearly three months ago, the night before Joe Pocatelli's shooting-party with the Gagler mob; he'd been "covering" the joints farther uptown lately. She was sure a pretty little thing. And could she tap dance!

Terry didn't have a girl, although he'd seen plenty of pretty ones in the four years of Monday nights he'd been "on the job." Not like this one, though. She was different; she had something the others lacked. Terry wondered if she were Irish.

The dance ended in a furious crescendo of taps; the music ceased and the girl, pirouetting slowly on her toes, threw wide her arms and smiled at the storm of applause which broke out. Then she skipped lightly from the floor and out through the maroon curtain.

Terry found himself joining heartily in the prolonged applause, forgetful for the moment of Joe Pocatelli and his probable peril, forgetful of everything but a vision of a dark girl in a golden gown and her incredibly twinkling little feet.

After a moment the curtain opened again and the girl stood in the spotlight, bowing. Then the spot moved with her as she walked back onto the floor.

But suddenly Terry was no longer looking at the girl in the golden gown, for the moving spotlight had picked out for an instant the features of a heavy-jowled man with wide shoulders who was passing along the edge of the floor, toward the rear.

Terry recognized him even in that flash: Detective Lieutenant Brannigan, head of the Broadway squad!

This must be the night!

He was sure of it when he saw Brannigan, apparently unnoticed by anyone else, slip into the very seat which Joe Pocatelli had so recently vacated.

First Pocatelli, fresh out of hospital; now Brannigan, his commanding officer! This was surely something hot. Terry forgot the lovely little tap-dancer, so absorbed was he in watching Lieutenant Brannigan and trying to puzzle out the significance of the plant they had taken up here in the Devil's Inn—Sam Brannigan, head of the Broadway squad and Joe Pocatelli, one of his ace men.

TERRY'S conscious mind was so taken up with this phenomenon that it was with something of a shock that a queer sensation seeped up from his subconscious perceptions. A message in the International code! *Tut-ut-ut—taaa—taaa—taaa—tut-ut-ut!* Three dots, three dashes, three dots! S. O. S.!

It came again then, insistently—the distress signal of the sea. And suddenly he realized from whence it came—from the twinkling little feet of the girl in the golden gown! Incredible, but true. She was tap-dancing the International code, very definitely picking it out with one swift foot.

A real message now: there was no doubt about it. Her rippling little foot said: "Take it easy; they're here. Dave

behind curtain, watching. Others my room waiting Brannigan to go. Keep away from B. or you both get it. They don't know me. Scram before B. leaves. Hurry—"

The message broke off abruptly, the tempo of the music increased and the girl finished her routine in a frenzied burst of steps, bowed to the applause, and skipped out through the curtains. Exultance flooded through young Terry McGlynn. This *was* the night! And glory be, he was going to help that girl.

HE had no time to wonder at the astonishing fact that a night-club dancer should signal him in the International code. Or how she had known he would be able to understand her message. It never occurred to him that the message was not intended for him.

As it most certainly was not. It was intended for the dark-haired and slim-hipped manager, the fellow Joe Pocatelli had called Danny. And its significance was not lost upon him! The moment the orchestra started again and the couples came out on the floor to dance, Danny slipped out into the foyer unobtrusively.

Terry, alone of those in the big room, saw him go. He wondered about it. He saw Brannigan unconcernedly munching a sandwich and admired his coolness. Just how much did he know, or suspect? And what had happened to Pocatelli?

"*They*," whoever they were, must have taken care of poor Joe. Now they were waiting for Brannigan to leave. And if he didn't— Yet there he sat, calmly eating a sandwich, not ten feet from the curtain behind which "Dave" was watching, waiting. The girl was there too!

They didn't know her, she'd said. But still— He was enormously relieved to see her come into the room again. She did not look toward Brannigan, but swiftly toward the foyer. Then she made her way to a table by the orchestra and sat down, alone. This, Terry felt, must be a signal to him.

He hesitated for a moment. Then the music, which had been swift and lively, changed to a slow and languorous waltz. Well, that was a dance he could manage! Abruptly he was out of his seat, threading his way through the swirl of dancers to her table. He stepped up, bowed and asked her to dance. Her look made him afraid, for a moment, that she would refuse. He couldn't have borne that. But she nodded slightly, and rose; then she was close in his arms.



His heart leaped. But before he could answer, she inquired: "Danny—he got away?" Then he felt that curious start of her body again, and looked toward the foyer. The dark-haired manager backed into sight, turned, looked helplessly at them, shook his head slowly.

"My God!" the girl said, her voice anguished. "They've got him cut off!"

It came again: the distress signal of the sea—S. O. S.—from the twinkling feet of the girl!

For one moment he looked into her eyes, blue as the lakes of Killarney. Surely she must be Irish! Then they were dancing silently. Terry was waiting for his cue—no telling whether "they" were among the dancers close to them or not. Then he felt that she was trying to get him to whirl her to the other end of the floor, opposite the foyer. It was less crowded there.

But when they were there and no dancers were jostling them, she still did not speak; she only looked into the foyer. He decided she was waiting for him to speak, so he whispered:

"They still out there?"

He felt her start, quiver for an instant.

"Yes," she breathed.

They whirled slowly and he said, very softly: "I'll take 'em from the rear. Is there another entrance?"

Quickly she whispered an address around the corner in Seventh Avenue.

"Number of your dressing-room?" he asked.

"Twelve," she said. "For God's sake, be careful!"

Terry's heart fell. So this was Danny? And it was he, the dark-haired manager she was worried about! He felt a queer indefinable pang.

Danny peered into the room from the foyer. Brannigan, taking a final swig of beer, was just rising.

"Scram before B. leaves," the tapping foot had said.

Well, B. was leaving now and that meant action! The music stopped. Terry bowed as she slipped out of his arms.

"Thank you, Miss—" he said, and hesitated.

"Geraghty," the girl supplied.

Geraghty! So she *was* Irish!

Her eyes, full of fear, turned now toward the rear of the room. Brannigan was leaving. He stepped through the maroon curtain, vanished from sight. Terry half expected to hear a shot. There was no sound. He looked at the manager, who was staring hard at the curtain.

Terry mumbled something to the girl. Then he was in the foyer, hurriedly putting on his hat, ignoring the coat. He stepped out onto the street. The usual

cab line waited. But directly across the street, was a dark sedan. Terry knew what that meant!

He hopped into the first cab, gave an uptown address at random, and settled back as the cab lurched forward. Around the corner he ordered the driver to stop, gave him a dollar, told him to drive north and not come back. Then he was making his way toward the address the girl had whispered to him.

As he approached the door it opened and Lieutenant Brannigan, contentedly picking his teeth, stepped out.

Terry seized his arm.

"Quick, Lieutenant!" he muttered. "They've got Pocatelli and they're after Danny. Follow me!"

There was a slight grunt from Brannigan, but Terry had darted through the door. Brannigan padded after him. It gave Terry a thrill to think he, Terry McGlynn, had given orders that Sam Brannigan had obeyed without a word!

As they noiselessly approached the door at the end of the long dark hallway, Terry drew his service revolver and turned, a hand to his lips, toward Brannigan. The big fellow was holding his gun ready. He nodded impatiently and Terry went on. Brannigan was beside him when he reached the door.

Cautiously Terry opened it a few inches and they peered into the corridor just as a rush of half-clothed girls poured past on their way to the dance-floor. Terry shook his head as Brannigan made as if to enter. Then across the corridor a door opened. It was Number Twelve!

Three men, their hands in their pockets, stepped out and started quickly toward the sound of the music. Terry felt himself jerked to one side. Brannigan, throwing wide the door, shouted hoarsely, "Put 'em high, Gagger!" and barged into the corridor.

AS the three men wheeled, guns came out of their pockets with their hands. Brannigan fired; one man, looking startled, clutched at his middle and then crumpled to the floor. Terry heard more shots and then, suddenly aware of the gun in his own hand, pulled the trigger.

One of the men dropped his gun and grabbed his dangling wrist with his left hand. At the same instant Terry felt a solid impact as if some one had landed a good stiff left hook to his ribs. He was pressing the trigger again when the third man dropped his gun, raised his hands and cried: "Don't shoot, Brannigan!"

There was a moment of utter silence. The music had stopped. The dark-haired manager pushed through the curtain, followed by two waiters and the girl in the golden gown. Other people were trying to get through the curtain but the waiters held them back. The manager was staring at the tableau in front of him—but the girl was staring at Terry.

He grinned foolishly at her, heard Brannigan saying: "It's okay, Danny; everything's okay,"—then the girl was hurrying toward him. There was a look of fear in her face. He felt a wave of tenderness for her. Nothing to be afraid of now! Poor little colleen. . . .

"Oh, God, they got you, they got you!" he heard her cry. She put one arm about him; with the other hand she touched his right side. He looked down stupidly. Her hand came away wet, red. He was astonished. He'd felt nothing—nothing but that sock in the ribs! He grinned apologetically, then his knees buckled and he slowly sat down, like an acrobat folding his legs, while she vainly tried to support his weight with her arm.

NEXT thing he knew a man in a white coat was bending over him, apparently gouging his side with red-hot irons. It hurt like the devil. He saw that his shirt had been cut away. The ambulance surgeon winked slyly at him and straightened up.

"You're okay, buddy," he said, "Lucky for you those guys packed .32's, though. Them pansy rods can't hurt a real man!" Then he heard *her* voice, full of concern.

"You're sure he's all right, Doctor?"

The ambulance surgeon stepped out of his line of vision and Terry saw her with Brannigan and Danny, all of them looking at him anxiously.

"Sure he's okay," said the man in white. "Slug bounced right off his fifth rib."

Terry smiled at them and tried to raise himself. But the effort hurt and the Doctor barked: "Lie back there!"

He lay back. He was on a sofa, his head on soft perfumed pillows. He recognized it—the same delicate fragrance he had breathed from her hair while they danced. This must be her dressing-room.

She had come close to him now and was bending over him, smiling mistily. She put her cool hand on his forehead and he forgot the stabbing little pains in his side. He tried to raise his right hand to touch hers, but it hurt too much. He

compromised on his left, and putting it over her small cool hand, held it tight against his head.

Men came into the room and talked. But Terry, gazing deep into blue eyes, paid no heed until he heard one word, "Inspector." He turned his head. There, beside Brannigan and several other detectives, stood Chief Inspector Mulvaney himself. Brannigan was saying:

"—so Dave Gagler and Whitey Saunders and a couple of punks drops in to knock Danny off, on account of he killed Mort Gagler, Dave's twin brother, in that shindig Pocatelli had in here a while back. So—"

"So you took the four of 'em?" boomed the Chief Inspector.

"Sure, so we took Dave and Whitey and one punk in here and the cop on post picks up the punk who's parked out in front," said Brannigan.

"Nice going, Sam," said Inspector Mulvaney. "We've got something to show the new administration now: the end of the Gagler mob. What a collar, Sam, what a collar!"

"Sure," agreed Lieutenant Brannigan. "But it's mostly the kid's collar, Inspector. He done all the real police work. I just hopped in for the clutch."

"The kid?" said Inspector Mulvaney.

"Sure," said Brannigan. Grinning, he jerked a massive thumb toward Terry, who, still tightly holding the girl's hand, was staring at the Chief Inspector. "Patrolman McGlynn—Terry McGlynn, radio, Headquarters, if his papers don't lie."

"A radio operator broke this case?" demanded the Chief Inspector.

"A damned good cop," said Lieutenant Brannigan.

Terry felt suddenly deflated, in spite of Brannigan's praise. The girl knew what he was now—nothing but a radio operator!

"So that's how it happened?" she said wonderingly. "You picked up that signal for Danny!"

THERE was that blasted Danny in again! Danny, who'd killed the dangerous Mort Gagler—Danny, the man the mob had been after! How could Terry compete with a guy like that? He dropped his hand listlessly. She took her hand away from his head and he closed his eyes.

Then hazily he heard words in Danny's voice: "—so when I got out of the corps, I taught her the wireless code. She learned to tap it with her toes, just for

a gag—used to practice her routine and talk to me that way. So tonight, when she ran smack into Dave Gagler, she decided to use the code gag to tip me off. She recognized him from pictures in the papers she'd seen of Mort, his twin, and knew what they'd come after. But her warning was too late; they had me bottled up, and were just waiting for Brannigan to shove off before giving me the old business. Then McGlynn here steps in and spoils their party. I was just born lucky."

Terry sighed in his heart. Well, that explained it, anyhow. And he'd say that guy *had* been born lucky—to have a girl who'd go through for him like that!

HE opened his eyes. The Chief Inspector was standing beside him. Flustered, Terry tried to sit up. The Chief Inspector waved him back.

"Take it easy, Mac," he said.

"(Mac!)" Chief Inspector Mulvaney had called him "Mac!"

Inspector Mulvaney held out his hand, took Terry's left.

"Just take it easy for a few days, Mac," he said kindly. "Then when you're all okay, report to Lieutenant Brannigan. Maybe he can find a spot for you."

Terry was looking at him incredulously. "In the—the *Detective Division*?" he asked.

The Chief Inspector nodded.

By the time Terry had grasped the full significance of this, everyone had left the room but the girl and Danny. They were both smiling at him.

Terry managed a rueful grin. To Danny he said: "You're a lucky guy, all right, fella! I think she's swell."

"Swellest kid sister I got," Danny said, and chuckled. He waved cheerfully, winked at the girl and was gone.

Terry's face had lighted up; he felt like singing. The girl smiled gently and coming close to him, again put her hand on his head. He looked up at her worshipfully.

"I meant it," he said. "I think you're swell—Miss Geraghty."

"The name's *Mary*, Terry McGlynn," said the girl softly.

She bent over him quickly and brushed his cheek with her lips.

"Mary," he whispered, almost to himself. And then, experimentally, just to see how it sounded: "Mary—McGlynn!"

Her eyes were shining. She bent again, and this time she kissed him on the lips.

A Captain of the

A former soldier of the Foreign Legion and officer of the Camel Corps here offers a stirring and authentic novelette.

By ARMAND BRIGAUD

"GENTLEMEN, attention!" a stalwart major announced. "General Laperrine!"

Instantly all conversation ceased. The officers assembled in the main hall of Fort Lallemand parted into two groups. The battle-scarred General replied to their salute with a worried smile as he walked down the aisle which they had formed in smart military fashion; then he turned anxiously to confront them.

"Gentlemen," Laperrine said amidst a deep silence, "with the few infantry and mounted units assembled around this fort, we will soon face the hordes of Sultan Ahmed el Sheerife, supreme leader of the Senoussi.

"Several score miles south of us towers the mysterious Hoggar, home of the veiled Touareg. Their late Chief of Chiefs, Moussa ag Amastane, was our faithful ally. But after the death of Moussa, the Touareg have grown restive. If they turn against us in this crucial moment, our situation and the situation of the Sahara will rapidly become desperate."

The piercing eyes of the General noticed a covert smile on the lips of a tall young captain of the First Foreign regiment. That action in another man would have stirred his wrath, but Laperrine merely scowled, because he had a sincere liking for Captain Tarver, an American who had come to Africa following the call of adventure.

"I am not overestimating our danger," he continued. "It is far from being so; we cannot hope for help. France has drained her dominions of most of her garrisons; all her available men are now fighting on the western front."

Laperrine paused, then with a nervous gesture he ordered his aid-de-camp, "Bring in the Touareg."

A few minutes later a party of gigantic tribesmen entered the hall. A blue veil, the Touareg *litham*, covered the lower part of each face and was attached to the back of the turbans; across the slits of

the *lithams* their eyes gazed haughtily. Their blue tunics fell to their knees, and partly covered their loose white trousers.

Before entering the room they had laid down, as a mark of respect, their shields, guns and lances; but they still carried their swords at their belts, and *telakas*, the peculiar Touareg cross-hilted poniards fastened to their left forearms.

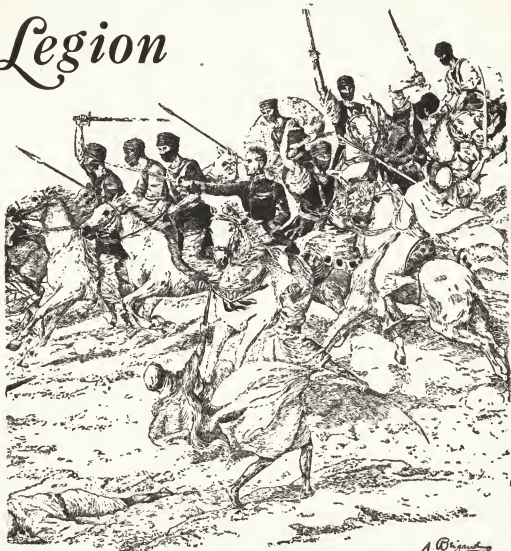
This imposing group of Saharan warriors was led by a woman of great beauty. Raidane was a lady of the Imemans, one of the three leading tribes of the Hoggar; unlike the men, she wore no veil over her face; her fine features suggested a kindly nature but a strong will, discernible by the firmness of her red mouth.

Raidane's complexion was so fair that the burning African sun had only slightly tanned her smooth skin. Her eyes were dark blue like those of many of her fellow tribesmen—a hue inherited from their ancestors, the stranded Celtic mercenaries of ancient Carthage; the brilliant gloss of her hair seemed to vie with the barbaric golden diadem encircling her head. Under the soft folds of a sleeveless tunic her body appeared firm and exquisitely shaped.

STARING disdainfully at the two lines of commissioned officers, who seemed almost dwarfed by their gigantic stature, the Touareg walked slowly toward General Laperrine, who invited them to sit down. Raidane accepted; the others remained standing, motionless like great statues. After an instant of tense silence Raidane began to speak, in halting but perfect French.

"Several moons ago a man of your race, the Captain Foucauld, grew tired of the world. He discarded his uniform for the frock of a hermit; then he came to live among us. His God was not our God, but he was a sincere, earnest man. He was so indefatigable in ministering to the unfortunate and the ailing, that we learned to respect and love him.

Legion



"But his body was not as enduring as his piety; the lack of rest, of proper food, sapped his vitality. Finally the sun and the sharp wind of the Hoggar were too severe for him.

"We saw his face grow thinner, and the strange gleam in his eyes told us that his reason was bordering on madness. Or perhaps he was a holy man whom we were unable to understand."

Raidane paused, then continued:

"We have negro slaves whom we treat kindly. Our Imrads, or inferior caste Touareg, are satisfied with their lot, because they know that they can gain advancement by deeds of gallantry. But Captain Foucauld began preaching that slaves and Imrads were our equals, that they were not bound to obey us.

"Our Imrads and slaves grew restless. They knew that the hermit voiced an unsound doctrine, but they thought that the French were purposely encouraging a

rebellion against the law of the Hoggar. This is the reason why we asked you to recall Mrbet F'caldji," Raidane concluded. "But you, General Laperrine, you failed to listen to our pleas!"

The General scowled. As a soldier he admired the fighting efficiency of the high caste Touareg, but he detested their utter aversion to any kind of work and their haughty attitude toward their subjects. However, for the sake of gaining the Touareg allegiance, he decided to curb for a time Foucauld's activities.

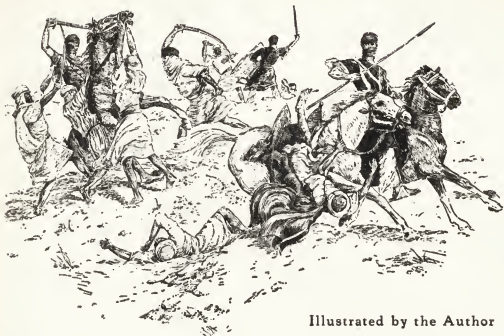
"I will order the Mrbet to leave the Hoggar," he announced.

"Too late!" Raidane answered. "Foucauld was murdered last week near his retreat at Mount Asakcem."

These last words excited an uproar. Captain Tarver shouted:

"You murdered him, you Touareg!"

"To your place, Tarver!" General Laperrine cried.



Illustrated by the Author

"Let him speak!" Raidane exclaimed. With an imperious gesture she held back the men of her escort who were hastily unsheathing their swords, and confronted the young man.

"What was Foucauld to you?"

"He was my friend!" Tarver said passionately. "How can you speak so coldly of him when his blood is on the hands of your fellow-tribesmen?"

"On the honor of our tribes, I can assure you that no Touareg killed Foucauld!" the Targuia vehemently retorted. "In the dead of night a man came to knock at his door, alleging that he was bringing some mail. In spite of the warnings of his servant, Foucauld hastily donned his frock, unlocked the door and stepped into the shadow of the cliff.

"It was a moonless night. Foucauld never saw the men who jumped on him, dragged him to a rock near by and shot him through the head. The murderers shot his servant too, but they neglected to make sure that the poor wretch was dead. Some early Touareg found him near the body of his master next morning at dawn, and learned from him that the killers had shouted at each other in the dialect of Senoussi Fezzan."

LAPERRINE sighed. Two years ago he had visited the former Captain and Vicomte Foucauld in the abode which the Touareg had carved for him near the rocky peak of Mount Asakcem. When demands for his removal came

from every part of the Hoggar, the vision of Foucauld's large burning eyes, of his gentle mouth, had haunted Laperrine and rendered him reluctant to hurt the former officer's feelings by forcibly obliging him to leave the tribes among whom he had chosen to live.

But the gravity of the situation confronting the Saharan dominion forced him to master his grief for his friend.

"There is little doubt that the Senoussi ordered Foucauld's murder and sent emissaries to kill him with the purpose of stirring trouble between the French and the Touareg," he said. "Let us join our forces and march against them."

Raidane stared at him disdainfully.

"You scorned our warnings; we cannot depend on you. We alone will rout the Senoussi. And afterward," she went on, "we will decide if it will be more profitable to us to renew our alliance with your people, or to drive them out of the Sahara."

The insolence of the Targuia struck General Laperrine like a physical blow; yet he admirably refrained from giving an infuriated reply, because he sensed that the veiled tribesmen had foreseen a break with the French, and that Raidane had come prepared for it.

Better to hide his anger, he went to the near-by window and glanced at the desert which stretched far out unto the horizon like a troubled brown sea.

Laperrine thought of the long years of wars, of deprivations and hardships when

he had seen the tricolor carried farther and farther into the interior, over lonely stretches of mountain and desert, across battlefields drenched with blood. The untamed wastes and the fierce tribes which held them had been conquered one by one; and at each new conquest Laperrine had rejoiced as if he were a knight pressing forward in quest of the Holy Grail.

Would everything be lost now? With Africa drained of troops; and the Senoussi advancing from Fezzan, the defection of the Touareg threatened to provoke a hurricane of rebellion which would send all the warlike nomads of the Sahara on the warpath.

The stubborn fighter's soul within Laperrine revolted against that thought.

"Think well before challenging us," he said slowly. "For the memory of Moussa ag Amastane I will overlook your insult, Raidane. I will wait, willing to favor a new understanding. The audience is ended. You may go."

THE piercing eyes of the Targuia scanned his countenance. Perhaps her intuition discerned under the mask of apparent calm the agonizing worry racking the mind of that gifted leader. A softer gleam shone in her eyes.

"I will repeat thy words, O commander of the French," she said at length. "Peace be with thee."

The Touareg lifted their right arms, palm upward, in sign of salute. Raidane turned about, and her glance sought Tarver; she singled him out, took notice of his wavy hair, his handsome features, his tall, splendid body.

"For the sake of your dead friend, you spoke harshly to me; but you have found favor in my eyes," she said with the peculiar directness of her race. Then she flung her cape about her, throwing one end over her shoulder, and left the hall followed by her guard of veiled warriors.

The Touareg had barely gone when Laperrine commanded harshly:

"Gentlemen, I wish to remain alone with Captain Tarver."

As soon as the door closed behind the last officer, Laperrine grasped Tarver by a shoulder.

"Tarver," he said, "as true as God is above all of us, I feel uneasy in giving you a mission which may become your doom. But you must follow Raidane and overtake her. Rely on the liking that she avowed for you; make love to her if necessary, but win her favor. Raidane

enjoys an immense power among the Touareg. The election of an Amenokal—a supreme chief—to take the place of the late Moussa, is imminent. Raidane's indorsement may give the chieftainship to one of those Touareg who are still friendly toward us."

"When shall I start, sir?"

"At once. Muster an escort and ride like the wind. Remember that Raidane's party is already going. They will have several minutes' start, which you will not easily overcome, for the Touareg are the fastest camel-riders of the Sahara."

"I am ready for duty. Good-by, sir."

"Good-by, Tarver; and good luck!"

The Captain gripped the hand proffered him by Laperrine, then hurried from the room. . . .

The escort selected by Tarver was composed of two-score Berbers of the camel corps. He had carefully avoided taking Arabs or blacks with him, for the Touareg hate Arabs, and consider negroes an inferior race. On the contrary, they easily fraternize with Berbers, who are descendants from an ancient white race which inhabited the whole hinterland of Algeria and Tunis before the advent of the Arabs.

Tarver had chosen as second in command the veteran Adjutant Gerard, a lanky middle-aged Norman, who had lived so long in the Sahara that he had come to consider it his adopted country.

The whole escort was mounted on racing meharas, single-humped camels who need water or food only twice a week, and are able to cover seventy miles a day; but in spite of the excellence of their mounts, Tarver and his men rode until late in the evening without coming within sight of the Touareg.

NEXT morning they broke camp before sunrise. The dull light coming from the east appeared misty with thick clouds. A breeze sprang up; it gathered strength by the minute; soon it raised huge clouds of sand with a whirling noise; a mehari, then another, bleated dismally. A few minutes later the terrific lash of the simoom swept over all the dreary wastes surrounding them, scooping up immense waves of thick dust as if to pull up the very bottom of the desert.

Covering their nostrils and mouths with the folds of their mantles, Tarver's men forced the whining camels to kneel sidewise against the wind and crouched close to the shelter offered by their big

shaggy bodies, which heaved and shook with great tremors. . . . When it seemed that the lungs and the pained bodies of men and beasts alike could stand the strain no longer, the buffeting of the flurries of sand slowed perceptibly. The air grew clearer and the muddy disk of a sickly sun appeared through the subsiding eddies of whirling dust.

Tarver arose and glanced scowling at the ground.

"The wind has blotted out the tracks left by the meharas of Raidane," he said to Gerard. "What are we going to do?"

"Let us ride in the direction of the Hoggar and trust to luck," the veteran replied. "Only luck can make us stumble on our quarry."

An hour later they reached a great sloping depression reaching to a far ridge of squat dunes. And here, suddenly, the report of a firearm crashed through the thin desert air.

To that first shot succeeded a sharp volley; then the confused uproar of battle came from behind the dunes. The Captain stopped his platoon, singled out four meharists and sent them ahead to scout. A few moments later the scouts returned at top speed, announcing excitedly that a party of Touareg were being attacked by a swarm of Bedouins.

"We've found them, Captain," Gerard said. "And it is the first time in my life that I've seen Bedouins play the part of the Divine Providence. They've surely stopped our Touareg for us; but let us hurry before they kill them."

Tarver nodded grimly and led the platoon quietly to the base of the highest dune; leaving half the soldiers in the saddle to parry any unforeseen move of the enemy, he climbed to the top, followed by the remaining troopers, who had deployed in a long skirmish line.

Tarver surveyed the situation. His military experience enabled him to realize how the Touareg had been cornered:

The simoom had blinded both the veiled tribesmen and the Arabs, who had unknowingly ridden almost on top of each other. When the storm abated, the Bedouins, perceiving their foes' scanty numbers, had attacked at once.

THE point where the first clash had taken place was marked by the blue-clad bodies of a few Touareg surrounded by the brightly colored burnouses of about as many dead Bedouins; but the Touareg had succeeded in breaking through their aggressors, and had taken

refuge on a jagged mass of rocks which jutted like a reef out of the surrounding sand. They had dismounted, placed their camels in the middle and formed a circle shoulder to shoulder around them. The Bedouins had leaped from their saddles too, for the place where the Touareg stood was a typical patch of *hammada*—a rock which shattered into sharp-edged stones by the combined action of the African sun and the desert wind; and as such it was an ill ground for the hoofs of their horses.

WITH their swords high, and firing their long-barreled guns, the nomad Arabs were rushing to the charge, yelling at the top of their lungs; they were climbing so close to the Touareg that the soldiers refrained from firing for fear of hitting the veiled tribesmen also.

"How can we help the Touareg?" Tarver muttered. "Shall we charge that Bedouin rabble?"

"Wait, *mon capitaine*, and don't worry," Gerard answered. "In a few minutes the Touareg will drive them away from the rocks. We will have then ample time to bring our guns into play."

A few moments later Gerard's words were justified. The Bedouins outnumbered the Touareg so that it seemed inevitable that they should sweep the thin line of veiled warriors at the first onset. But as soon as they came within range of the Touareg lances, Tarver had occasion to marvel at the uncanny Touareg skill with that weapon.

The *allars*, the long lances of solid iron that only the veiled tribesmen know how to maneuver, whirled and darted like bolts of lightning. They gave the Bedouins no chance to come nearer with their swords.

The fighting was so rapid that Tarver was unable to see its details. He had a confused vision of swarm after swarm of frenzied Arabs rushing against the Touareg line, their brown arms waving frantically, their swords flashing under the sun; but almost instantly the same hordes were hurled back, leaving heaps of dead and disabled on the jagged slopes.

At length the Bedouins turned about and fled toward the place where they had left their tethered horses; but before they could leap to the saddle, two leaders who wore the green turban distinctive of the pilgrimage to Mecca succeeded in stopping them. Stretching themselves on the ground, the Bedouins began sniping at the Touareg.

If Tarver had not interfered, that would have marked the end of Raidane's warriors. They were too few to meet the Bedouins successfully in a hand-to-hand encounter out of the shelter of the rocks, and they were too near their foes to escape safely. To make matters worse, the poor Touareg marksmanship and their antiquated rifles gave a great advantage to the Bedouins, who were armed with Turkish guns of a comparatively new model.

The roar of Tarver's machine-guns changed all that. The Bedouins, who had not suspected the presence of that new foe, turned and stared dumfounded at the dunes. But whatever may be their sins, it must be said that Arabs are stubborn fighters. One of the two green-turbaned leaders had been killed by the first burst of machine-gun fire; but the other jumped to his feet and led his men against the soldiers.

The Bedouins advanced in such a loose formation that, though their losses were heavy, the machine-guns seemed unable to stop them. Biting his long mustache, Gerard snatched a rifle from a soldier, took careful aim and pressed the trigger. The Bedouin leader dropped his curved sword, clutched at the air and fell backward in the arms of one of his followers. Gerard took aim again: the man who held the dying chieftain staggered and fell with him on the sand, where both remained motionless. At this the Bedouins broke and ran pell-mell toward the horses.

But the whinnies of a score of mounts which had been hit by stray bullets, and the scent of blood, had terrified the horses so that their guards were almost unable to hold them. Kicking, rearing and biting viciously right and left, they tried to break loose. When the full blast of machine-gun fire fell among them, following their escaping masters, the animals became uncontrollable.

In the meantime Tarver had mounted his camel. Leading the mounted meharists, he came swiftly upon that tangled mass of men and beasts, while the Touareg rushed against them from another side. The encounter was about to degenerate into a massacre when the surviving Bedouins threw down their weapons in token of surrender. But the Touareg had not forgotten that in their wars with the nomad Arabs no quarter was given or received. With the greatest difficulty Tarver and his soldiers re-



strained them from annihilating their cowed foes; then, while the soldiers mustered the prisoners and the Touareg darted after the escaping horses which galloped all about them, Captain Tarver rode toward a Targui of majestic bearing who had remained on the mound. He jumped from his mehari and climbed the rocks. The Targui proffered a slender hand, palm upward.

"*Iselane?*" ("What news?"—the Touareg form of greeting.)

"*Elouane,*" ("Much of it") Tarver replied in Tamashek, laying in approved fashion his hand on the hand of the tribesman.

With a sudden move the Targui pulled away the *litham*, and Tarver stared at the lovely features of Raidane.

"How did you happen to come here? Why did you help us?"

"I rode almost two days, hoping to meet you again," Tarver replied.

RAIDANE'S cheeks flushed. "I have often thought of you since the moment I left the oasis of Hairane. I prefer to owe my life to you rather than to anybody else. But I cannot believe that General Laperrine granted you a leave of absence for my sake." She gazed at Tarver, and noticing his confusion

asked slowly: "What is your mission, Captain Tarver?"

Laperrine's plan was running awry; Raidane had surmised only too easily that he was coming with a hidden scheme. Tarver strove to think quickly of some excuse to justify his chasing after her.

"My mission concerns your people," he bluntly said; "but when I was informed by my scouts of the danger confronting you, I thought only of saving your life."

On the stretch of desert in front of them the Touareg were loading the captured horses with the spoils of the dead Bedouins and placing the surviving foes astride the spare mounts with their hands fastened behind their backs. The Berber soldiers, whose native dialect was similar to the Touareg, had fraternized with the veiled tribesmen, and the plain resounded with their calls and harsh guffaws.

"Thanks to you, Tarver, the doom that was closing on us has been changed in a great *razzour* (raid)," Raidane said. The victorious yells of her men, the joy of the conquest, had made her eyes shine.

"Where will you go now, Tarver?" she asked at length.

"I want to ride to the Hoggar with you."

"I will help you to enter the Hoggar without opposition," Raidane said, while her face assumed an inscrutable look. "But beware, O Tarver; for our mountains are ruled by strange laws."

LOOK at their covetous eyes staring at our supplies across the slits of their *lithams*!" Gerard whispered to Captain Tarver. "If it were not for Raidane—"

"The Touareg would probably jump on us and cut our throats for the sake of robbing us, of course," Tarver concluded, lighting a cigarette.

The ranges of the Hoggar arose all around them like majestic walls and imposing terraces of a velvety blue.

"This is the second night we spend within this country," Gerard mused aloud, throwing a branch into the camp-fire. "But I wonder if we will ever come back alive from it."

Lazy wafts of warm wind stirred the flames of the fire. The shadows of the men sitting around contracted when a lull of wind made the flames abate, then darted, uncoiling oddly, when with a crackling of burning branches the flames leaped high.

Suddenly a strange melody, unlike any western music but entralling as a charm,

mingled with the hushed conversations and the munching of tethered camels.

"It is an *amzad*, the single-string Touareg violin," Gerard said.

From a group of tamarisks out of the ruddy glow of the fire came the low voice of a woman singing the Touareg invocation to Tanit the moon-goddess:

*Moon of the night, silent and shy,
Moon of the heaven, silvery and discreet,
Moon of the soft unknown azure above us
Which floods with light the forbidden
peaks of the Hoggar,
And the twisting valleys and the quiet
desert—*

Hear my word, O Tanit:

*I crave happiness, and know not where to
find it;*

*I crave joy and I know not where to seek
it.*

*I want a lover but no one has stirred my
desire!*

While the last notes of her song died on the air, Raidane heard a rustling of branches at her side. She turned abruptly and confronted Captain Tarver.

"Excuse me," the Captain apologized, "Your voice—I had to come nearer."

"Are you not afraid of Tanit?" Raidane whispered. Tarver lifted his handsome face toward the crescent shining in the sky amidst thousands of glittering stars; then he lowered his head and gazed at Raidane. The Targuia had discarded her headdress, and her hair fell soft and wavy on her shoulders; the semi-darkness made her beauty even more alluring.

"Why should I fear Tanit?" he said.

"Strange supernatural laws hold sway in these forbidden gorges," said Raidane. "Deep in this mysterious range there is a dead town known only to the Touareg. Nobody dares dwell there, for it is inhabited by the wraiths of the dead."

"In its central wind-swept square stands a huge statue of Tanit, the goddess who ruled the desert in ancient times. No one worships Tanit any more. But the law of Tanit carved at the feet of that statue says that the stranger who comes to the Hoggar led by a Targuia will forever remain with her. Tarver, I am giving you a fair warning. Turn back; don't come with me!"

The words of General Laperrine came to Tarver's mind:

"If it should be necessary, make love to Raidane—but win her support. Only Raidane may persuade the Touareg to help us; and without Touareg help, we will be unable to hold the Sahara."

Such an undertaking would not be an unpleasant one; the fire in her eyes set Tarver's blood racing. But he must find a way of carrying out his mission without shattering the faith of Raidane.

His struggle for self-control left him pale and trembling. And Raidane, who had been staring closely at him as if to read his thoughts, suddenly lifted her arms to him. His scruples vanished; he took her in his embrace and sought her lips with his own.

EARLY next morning while the rays of the rising sun enveloped the mountains with delicate tints of pale rose and mauve, they broke camp and rode toward the very heart of the Hoggar region. After a couple of hours of steady climbing, the sun rose high. In spite of the altitude, the stillness of the air made the heat almost unbearable.

"We will soon reach a higher plateau where the air is cooler," Raidane promised. "We are nearing the end of our journey. We are not far from the camp where the chiefs of the Hoggar are assembled."

They came at length to an imposing array of precipitous cliffs. When they reached the base of that forbidding ridge, Tarver perceived a steep passage opening between two straight walls of rocks.

Raidane hastened her mehari toward that narrow gorge. A few minutes later the camels and the horses climbed with painful strides, loosening scores of stones which rolled clattering down the path.

"Sidi Captain Tarver, look!" a soldier suddenly shouted.

A square boulder of imposing bulk jutted out of the wall of rocks to their left. Its flat surface bore a row of ancient letters sculptured and painted in red many centuries before. The aged vermilion dye had faded to a muddy pink, but the inscription, one of the earliest of the Touareg country, still stood out vividly. Its language was the Tafihr, a written Punic dialect which the Touareg use even today.

Seeing that Tarver's eyes were riveted on it, Raidane asked if he knew what it meant. The Captain shook his head; in his intercourse with Touareg he had learned their spoken language, but was unable to decipher Tafihr inscriptions.

"It says," the Targuia read slowly: "*'This is Tanit's word to the stranger— if you are weary of your life, keep on climbing. If you come as a friend seeking friends, beware just the same.'*"

A gust of wind arose, refreshing the suffocating atmosphere, but filling the gorge with dismal wailing.

"The very wind warns us to return!" a soldier exclaimed.

The leathery voice of Gerard, accustomed to dominate the din of battles, answered him.

"Since when do you take orders from the wind, Ali ben Abad?"

Gerard's words seemed to break the depressing influence of the place. The laughter of both soldiers and Touareg echoed loud, magnified by the narrowness of the defile. From one end of the column to the other arose at once a cheerful sound of conversation.

THEY finally emerged from the shadow of the pass, and the hot sun enveloped them in its glare. When Tarver's eyes became accustomed to the flurries of heat-haze dancing in front of him, he perceived that they had reached a plateau where a gaudy Touareg village appeared close to a grove of tamarisks. According to Touareg fashion, the village had no houses whatever, but a large number of tents of camel-hair adorned with pieces of brightly colored leather and disks of shiny metal. The surrounding plain swarmed with Touareg warriors. Horses and camels were picketed everywhere.

The throngs of veiled warriors greeted Raidane, lifting their right arms; but they glared with undisguised hostility at the soldiers, and when these entered the village, the attitude of the crowd became





decidedly threatening. The tribesmen began to whisper at each other, to close in on Tarver and his escort.

Noticing the gleam of unsheathed swords, the Captain was about to shout to his men to draw their weapons and form a square when Raidane cried:

"Peace, Touareg! Don't you see the prisoners that we are bringing with us? They are the survivors of a Bedouin horde which had surrounded us in the desert. These French warriors routed them and saved our lives."

Raidane's words soothed the tribesmen, who stepped back, lowering their weapons. One among them, conspicuous for a kind of waistcoat embroidered with silver which he wore above his blue tunic, came to greet Tarver.

"I am Al-Akhar, brother to the chief of the clan of the Isakamaren," he said, "Honor my tent; be my guest."

"Go with him. I will look for you later," Raidane said to Captain Tarver. She smiled reassuringly at him as she started to lead her camel away.

"Come here!" Al-Akhar shouted to the men of his retinue. He pointed out the soldiers to them and said: "Kill some of my sheep; spread victuals in your tents. These men are your guests."

"Your warriors will be well treated," he said to Tarver. "I will now show the way to you and to your brother-officer. My tent is yours. It is a honor."

A few moments later the elated Henare, Al-Akhar's wife, beamed happily at the two officers and instructed her slaves to spread the usual victuals of a Touareg banquet: bowls of sorgho, two kinds of

kus-cous, one of chopped vegetables and meat mingled together, and the other of spiced figs and dates; half a lamb freshly broiled, great pitchers of goat's milk, and a sharp cheese hard as a stone, of which the Touareg are extremely fond. Tarver, Gerard, Henare's family and a group of guests squatted around the rug on which the food had been placed.

The meal was well cooked. But contrasting with their habitual stateliness, the table-manners of the Touareg jarred Tarver considerably, and he welcomed the end of the meal and Al-Akhar's suggestion that they should spend the rest of the afternoon under the shade of the trees at the rear of the village.

NEAR sunset a slave girl sent by Raidane came to Tarver. The Captain followed across the thickets until they reached a lonely tent. The girl lifted the flap serving as a door, and Tarver stepped within.

When his eyes grew accustomed to the weak glow of a lone lamp, he noticed that the sides of the tent and the floor were littered with leopard-skins, rugs and long pieces of strange metallic, flexible draperies which appeared formed of golden links interwoven. Draped in a soft gown, her bare arms sparkling with golden bracelets, Raidane sat on a pile of silken cushions. Her face had a dreamy, enigmatic expression. She appeared to Tarver as unfathomable as the uncanny atmosphere surrounding her native mountains.

Almost without volition, he knelt at her side. Instantly she drew him close and kissed him hungrily, fiercely. . . .

A booming sound coming from the village shook Tarver, who gently unclasped Raidane's arms and jumped to his feet.

"It is the tobol drum placed in the middle of the village," Raidane answered the query in his eyes. "We were dreaming; the dream is broken. I am afraid we will soon have to part, my friend."

SOMETHING in her expression alarmed Tarver.

"What do you mean?" he asked tensely.

"Don't you know?" Raidane whispered. "This is an epochal night. The drum calls the Touareg to elect their chief of chiefs." With a lithe motion of her body she arose, confronting Tarver. "Tonight," she said, "Akhmouk will become chief of the Hoggar."

Akhmouk was an intractable foe of the French, and Tarver frowned.

"Raidane," he said impetuously, "what is this madness? If the French should go, the teeming millions of Arabs would in the long run wipe out the Touareg. Raidane, the tribes will listen to you. Don't let Akhmouk become supreme leader of the Hoggar!"

"Your arguments have no value," Raidane exclaimed. "Our swords will deal with the Arabian hordes. There is no reason why we should endure the yoke of the French."

"There is something more," she continued, lowering her voice. "Akhmouk is my cousin. If I should turn against him, I would be branded a traitor. I have no doubt that as soon as you gain your end, you will leave the Hoggar, will stamp out from your heart the memory of the few times your lips met mine. Bereaved of love and authority, I will remain an outcast among my people. Is this the future you plan for me?"

Deeply moved, he cried passionately:

"I will never leave you. Away from you I could find no peace. I love you, Raidane."

"Would you go so far as to ask me in marriage?" the Targuia whispered then.

Her words sobered Tarver. His in-born racial ideals revolted at the thought of marrying a tribeswoman. Stunned, he remained speechless.

He saw Raidane bite her lips. "She understands that I could never do that," Tarver reflected sadly. "Her pride is wounded. Her love will turn to hatred. Everything will be lost."

But on the contrary an expression of infinite tenderness shone in the sad eyes of the Targuia.

"Allah be blessed!" she exclaimed with tears in her voice. "I knew that an insurmountable abyss separated us. But at least you do not insult me with a lie!"

She threw a mantle on her shoulders and rushed out of the tent. Tarver followed.

When they reached the meeting-place, the pick of the Touareg clans had already gathered. Remarkably beautiful, the women, draped in soft robes and covered with gleaming barbaric jewelry, sat around a glowing fire. The men squatted behind them, their eyes shining through the slits of their *lithams*. The moonlight bathed the imposing line of the surrounding peaks; a velvety darkness enveloped the steep slopes.

The haunting notes of the *amzad* fluttered above the crackling of the burning branches and the hushed murmur of conversations. With this overture dictated by ancient custom, the meeting was open.

Raidane arose. Surrounded by the red glow of the fire, and sharply in relief against the velvety darkness of the landscape, she began to recite the poem of thirst composed by the late Amenokal Moussa.

The poem told how, coming back from a raid, Moussa separated himself from his companions for the sake of hunting, and lost his way amidst the arid wastes of the Erg Edeyen desert. For thirteen days he wandered without finding water. At last, worn and almost demented, he reached the shallow well of Takket and drank greedily, but soon fell to the ground and lost consciousness. The next morning an old woman came to the well and found him deathly ill. She took pity on him, nursed him and gave him a camel and provisions, so that he was enabled to return to his clan.

Raidane concluded the poem, stretched an arm toward the flame and said slowly:

"The fire is my witness. I am wondering if we would gain anything by discontinuing Moussa's policies. After all, the late Amenokal took advantage of his alliance with the French, and under his rule our tribes attained a prosperity never known before."

RAIDANE'S words filled Tarver with fervent gratitude, but drew an angry murmur from the greater part of the assembled tribesmen. A stately Touareg arose disdainfully. Almost seven feet high, even among Touareg he was a man of heroic stature. His brawny sun-

burned arms wore no trinkets, and his black eyes glowed like burning coals.

"I, Akhmouk ag Inarti, what do I care for the Amenokal?" he haughtily said. "But answer me, Touareg:

"Why must we obey the French? Are we born of the wombs of slaves? Even if our dream of freedom should fail, would it not be braver to die in the glory of battle rather than live under the boot of a master?"

A rumble of approval came from the crowd. Maddened by the certainty that Akhmouk's words had deeply impressed the Touareg, Tarver jumped to his feet.

"Akhmouk," he shouted, "do you not remember that the endless onslaught of the overwhelming Bedouin hordes was bleeding to death the Touareg nation until the French put a stop to it?

"Touareg bravery is unparalleled, but the veiled warriors are a few thousands. Alone they could not hold their own against the teeming millions of Arabs!"

He motioned with a sweeping gesture to the surrounding mountains.

"If the European troops would leave the Sahara, these towering ridges, these gorges would inevitably become the grave of your race. If you wish to survive, follow the policies of Moussa."

WITH a furious growl several warriors unsheathed their swords; a score of voices shouted:

"Who are you? How dare you speak at this meeting?"

But at the same time a group of warriors threw themselves between Tarver and the partisans of Akhmouk. These were mostly Taitoqs, members of a former Imrad tribe which had been elevated to the higher caste by the late Amenokal Moussa. Their chief Sadji roared:

"This man saved Raidane; he speaks from the heart. Don't you dare strike at him, for he is our guest and a chosen one!"

During a few minutes the two factions seemed ready to settle their differences on the spot, sword in hand. At length the entreaties and exhortations of the women restored peace: the tumult slowly subsided. Raidane's appealed:

"Touareg, elect now your Amenokal! Touareg, keep in mind the true interests of the Hoggar!"

The tribesmen split into various groups, called to each other, argued. When the votes were counted, it proved to be a deadlock: Sadji had as many friends as Akhmouk.

A premonition convinced Tarver that a second attempt to elect a chief would turn the balance in Akhmouk's favor. Again he stepped forward; the tense silence that instantly gripped the assembly showed clearly that this time both friends and foes were eager to hear what he had to say.

"How can you sit and argue while the Senoussi are invading the Touareg country?" he shouted at the top of his lungs. "Let the sword decide who will rule the Hoggar! Let the one who gains most glory in the coming battle become Amenokal!"

The Touareg had expected from him a renewal of entreaties and warnings. His sudden proposition, so suited to their nature, provoked a veritable stampede. The men jumped to their feet, lifting high their gleaming swords; the women waved frantically their jeweled arms. Their voices united in a thundering roar: "War! War!"

The cry was heard by the Imrads who waited for the result of the election among the tents of the village, and all over the plain; their battle-yells rang on the air; the drum began thumping furiously. The echoes of the surrounding mountains magnified the din into an immense, swelling noise.

For several minutes the clamor kept on unabated; at length it decreased, like a hurricane that slowly subsides.

Sadji approached Tarver. "Inshallah!" he bluntly said. "I will never forget that you stopped Akhmouk from being elected Amenokal, that you were the one to propose a solution which favors me, for I am the best swordsman among the Touareg. At the head of my Taitoqs I will mow the Senoussi like grass."

Tarver gazed at him. Sadji was of medium size, broad-shouldered and cat-like in his motions. His eyes shone with intelligence; his person bore the undeniable mark of authority; yet Sadji had none of the magnetic, heroic traits which made Akhmouk such a remarkable figure.

NOW the fire was dying out; around them dark shapes of the Touareg passed like ghosts in the dim light of the new moon. The plain resounded with muffled shouts, the pad of sandaled feet, of bleating of camels and whinnying of horses.

"Are you glad, Tarver?" Raidane said tenderly.

The Targuia had thrown the folds of her mantle around her body to ward off

the chill of the night. Her lovely eyes appeared tired and sad under the cold beams of the young moon.

"For your sake I turned against my flesh and blood," she whispered dreamily. "But you did the rest, Tarver. We will be in the saddle at dawn."

THE "harka" or expeditionary force which had originally left the Isakamaren camp had been joined on its way by additional parties of warriors. These were the whole contingent of Raidane's tribe. Altogether about four thousand Touareg were coming down from the last precipitous slopes of the eastern Hoggar.

The country stretching in front of them was a desolate succession of mounds and gullies which resembled in the distance a sea of rocks. Fearing that ambushed enemies might lie in waiting, hidden by that treacherous ground, the Touareg leaders sent ahead negro scouts.

Suddenly a Targui headman sheltered his eyes from the sun with his cupped hands, gazed at a distant hillock and shouted excitedly:

"Can you make out that line of riders? They seem to wear takarbasts. Are they friends or disguised enemies?"

The slave scouts were galloping toward the advancing riders. A short while later they signaled that it was safe to proceed. The harka cantered after them.

As the distance halved, several warriors growled:

"They are our brothers Ifogha. Name of Allah! How bedraggled they look!"

The fugitives, for such they were, presented a most pitiful sight. They were a confused mob of wounded tribesmen and desperate, wild-eyed women. A few of them were astride horses and meharas; the others trudged on on foot.

As soon as the Touareg reached them, they began lamenting their misfortune—which was due to their foolhardiness.

Undaunted by the overwhelming numbers of the invading Senoussi, instead of retreating, the Ifoghas had rushed to attack them, but their desperate resistance had been swiftly crushed. The Senoussi had then stormed the Ifogha villages, slaughtered the helpless children, killed with atrocious tortures the wounded Ifogha warriors.

Covered with wounds, without food or water, the survivors grimly retreated toward the Hoggar. Dragging their bleeding feet among the sharp stones under a broiling sun, the Targuias had carried toward the haven of the mountains their



infant children, while the older ones stumbled on painfully, holding to their gowns. The men, their *lithams* and tunics soaked with blood oozing from their wounds, marched behind, ready to turn against any Bedouin pursuit.

Swearing vengeance, Akhmouk and Sadjî gave most of the slaves and provisions of the harka to the weary Ifoghas, took leave from them, and hurried on with their followers, who were by now aroused to the point of frenzy. . . .

Near sunset they encountered a troop of French meharistes led by Lieutenants Vella and Brigaud, two veteran Saharans on patrol duty in that territory; but, purposely uninformed of impending events, Vella and Brigaud had not known of the Ifogha disaster until the villages were ravaged. Upon learning of it they had, however, at once thrown their troop between the retreating Touareg and the Senoussi, checking pursuit.

VELLA brought an estimate of the Senoussi forces. These consisted of two thousand regulars drilled and commanded by Turkish officers, also three thousand renegade Touareg and countless swarms of Bedouins.

Learning that the Senoussi were numerous and better drilled than the Hoggar Touareg, Tarver bluntly turned to Akhmouk and Sadjî, and warned them that the coming battle threatened to be a duel of modern tactics rather than a tribal bedlam of headlong charges.

"If you don't want to see your mountains under the heel of the Senoussi," he snapped, "yield the command to the French officers who are with you."

Sadjî nodded his approval, but Akhmouk grudgingly consented only upon Tarver's assurance that it would be but a temporary provision.

Tarver's eyes flashed with elation. Up to that point he had carried out, and even surpassed, Laperrine's orders.

"Vella," he asked, "you know this territory—where do you think we should line up against the Senoussi?"

Vella was a cold-eyed, reckless Corsican, whose military skill and ability to seize situations at a glance were renowned from Algeria to the Niger River.

"Under the circumstances I suggest a defensive battle," said Vella. "An hour ago, in crossing the gorge of Assakao, I took notice of its tactical possibilities. I think that in our hands it would become an impregnable position. The Senoussi are marching on that natural fortress but they will be unable to reach it before tomorrow."

"We will be there by then," Tarver promised. "We will give them a warm reception."

THE moon was high when they came to the gorge. Fearing that a hurried Senoussi advance might catch the Touareg napping, Tarver set at once to muster a battle-line. While he carefully took notice of the peculiarities of the ground, swarms of slaves brought on hundreds of fine horses, for though the Touareg travel on camels, they prefer the handier horses in battle. The veiled tribesmen alighted from their meharas, leaped on the prancing steeds and waited for Tarver's commands.

About one mile across and surrounded by inaccessible cliffs, the gorge of Assakao arises plateau-like above the yellow sands of the desert. Its rocky, jagged ground rises sharply on one side, forming a steep hillock; Tarver placed there Gerard with his soldiers, and around them he mustered the half-score of minor Touareg clans. The opposite or left wing he entrusted to Brigaud's troop and the whole force of the Tedjehe Mellet. He gave the command of the center and of the three most important Touareg tribes to Vella, with the Taitoqs forming a first line and the Imeman and Ikerremoin arrayed as a mobile reserve behind them.

When these preparations were completed, Tarver and the other officers went to sit around a camp-fire on which their orderlies were cooking the evening meal.

And there sometime later, Raidane joined them. Her usual haughtiness was gone. She glanced at Tarver first, then at the others with a pleading attitude. Tarver understood that Raidane was eager to have his friends approve of her.

Vella too perceived what passed in Raidane's mind. He went to her, greeted her not with the elaborate Touareg forms, but with the plain, courteous way with which he would have greeted a Western woman. Although she understood his

manner but slightly, Raidane sensed his meaning and smiled happily.

The gorge droned with the numberless rustlings and conversations of the bivouac. With the majestic ranges of the Hoggar at their shoulders and the rippling dunes of the desert in front of them, they talked quietly of the ordeal of the next day. At length Vella and Brigaud took leave. Gerard lingered. When the others were gone, he stared at Tarver with a strange expression on his rugged face.

"Captain," he muttered grimly, "do you believe in premonitions?"

"Why, Gerard?"

"Well, I am not superstitious; nor am I only a frightened fool," Gerard said, straightening his shoulders. "But just the same I feel that tomorrow I will be killed. I want to say good-by, Captain," he concluded, proffering his bony hand.

"Rather a foolish idea, old boy!" Tarver stammered, gripping Gerard's hand. Under the pale beams of the moon, the shady hollows on Gerard's cheeks and his long, matted mustache made him resemble a corpse from which the sand of a desert grave had been brushed away. His words, matching his ghastly appearance, had a sinister sound.

"Good luck to you, Captain. Good luck to you, Raidane ag Aitarel!" Gerard said. He straightened at attention, brought his hand to the vizor of his cap, then turned about and walked slowly toward the position entrusted to him.

RAIDANE stared after the tall, loose-jointed figure picking his way across the groups of sleeping Touareg and the piles of saddles and weapons. At length she whispered:

"He said the truth. He will not see the moon of next evening."

Tarver started. Raidane's eyes closed slowly; her face assumed a trance-like expression: "Tomorrow will be a bloody day," she continued dreamily. "I see the gorge and the desert covered with dead and dying. I see Gerard dead."

"What will be of the Touareg? Who will win?"

"I do not know; I feel that our fate and the fate of the people of the Hoggar hang in the balance." With a shudder Raidane opened her eyes and stared at Traver with an agonized expression.

The deep-throated shout of the Touareg sentries suddenly rang from one end of the gorge to the opposite one:

"*It is the hour of the lion!*" (Mid-

night). "We watch over you. Sleep in the name of God."

"Let us sleep," Raidane murmured, drawing her mantle over her shoulders.

They lay side by side on a couch of rugs and saddle-blankets built by the orderlies near the embers of the fire. . . .

The sun was high in the sky when a firm hand shook Tarver.

"Sidi Capitaine, awake! El Senoussi are coming."

Tarver glanced around. Raidane was nowhere in sight. Not far from him the Imemans were saddling their horses. He gulped a cup of coffee brought to him by his orderly, and leaped astride a prancing horse.

A short canter brought him to the right of the battle-line, where the ground rose sharply. The tribesmen who stood there respectfully opened a lane for him. Gerard beckoned to him from the summit where the meharistes of Tarver's escort crouched around their machine-guns.

"Look!" a tribesman suddenly shouted.

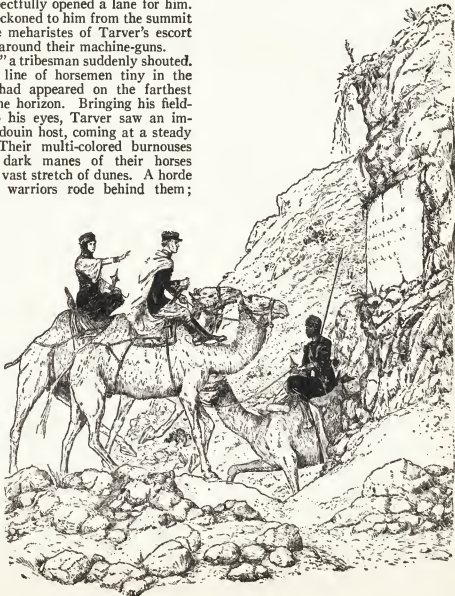
A long line of horsemen tiny in the distance had appeared on the farthest edge of the horizon. Bringing his field-glasses to his eyes, Tarver saw an immense Bedouin host, coming at a steady canter. Their multi-colored burnouses and the dark manes of their horses covered a vast stretch of dunes. A horde of veiled warriors rode behind them;

they wore blue turbans and *lithams* like the Hoggar Touareg, but they had white tunics instead of blue ones. These were mongrel Touareg of the Air who had intermarried with blacks.

The Captain watched anxiously the advance of the Senoussi. But his fear that they might notice in time the Touareg crouching among the boulders of the slopes confronting the desert soon gave way to a surety that the Senoussi were running right into the trap laid for them.

"The fools!" Tarver chuckled. "Their easy victory over the Ifoghas blinded them. They think they're going to have a triumphal march." . . .

The two thousand Senoussi regulars constituted the last division of the invading army. At their head rode Sultan



Ahmed el Sheerife and Nazim Bey, a Turkish officer. Furiously biting his lips, Nazim fidgeted with his cravache. At length he could keep silent no longer.

"Glory of Allah!" he snarled. "Why don't you let me cover the front of this mongrel army with a veil of scouts? We have been informed that a Touareg host is gathering somewhere in the Hoggar. Do you realize what would happen if a large Touareg force should unexpectedly swoop on our men?"

SULTAN AHMED stared at him with contempt and hatred. Although the two were allied and Moslem both, they embodied the different turn of mind and the hatred separating their nations.

Ahmed the Senoussi was a tall, stately Arab. His regular, handsome features were framed by a thick, well-trimmed black beard; he was an impressive, awe-inspiring man; but his burning jet-black eyes shone with blind fanaticism.

Nazim was short, husky and scowling. The Turk had the wary courage of a panther and the keen mind of a resourceful warrior. The years he had spent in the Prussian Academy of War at Potsdam had given him the knowledge and skill of a modern tactician. Like all Turks, he held the Arabs in contempt, and did not care to disguise his feelings. Sultan Ahmed resented his lack of religious zeal, his sneering attitude, his very military skill—because it was of Western pattern.

"Nazim," he said, "if you do not like the ways of my people, why don't you go back to Constantinople?"

"For the plain reason that I was sent to you with detailed instructions which I can seldom fulfill on account of your opposition," Nazim bluntly replied. "Otherwise I would not ride among your rabble. But my feelings and our quarrels matter little. Our duty commands us to lead intelligently your Senoussi. We are doing nothing of the sort; we are courting disaster, and you are responsible for it."

"Phaw! What do you fear?" Ahmed haughtily replied. "Are we not marching under the banner of the Holy War? Are we not blessed in the eyes of Allah? Unseen by mortal eyes, the Angel who guided the Prophet to the Paradise of Allah flies at the head of our warriors."

"Just the same I would feel better if a hundred scouts were riding ahead of the Bedouins," Nazim muttered, pulling at his waxed mustache. "Angels are not recognized mainstays in modern tactics."

With a contemptuous smile Ahmed turned his head away from him as if he were a loathsome sight. In the meantime, when less than fifty yards parted them from the gorge, the first ranks of the Senoussi suddenly perceived the Touareg and stopped their horses abruptly. The unexpected halt caused the following swarms of tribesmen to crowd on them and on each other.

Into that tangled mass of yelling men and rearing horses struck the simultaneous volley of three thousand Touareg rifles. In a few moments the plain became a shambles. The Bedouin dead soon were so many that in several points they formed veritable mounds of swarthy limbs and multicolored garments.

In spite of the terrific odds, the desert Arabs attempted the impossible and spurred their horses against the slope. With manes and tails flying to the wind, the frenzied beasts filled the gaps torn by the rifle-fire, trampled on dead and wounded, and straining every muscle, clambered toward the rim of rocks held by the Taitogs. But the latter took cover between boulders and bushes, struck with their spears at the stumbling horses and the bewildered Bedouin horsemen, shot them point-blank and easily avoided the slash of the Bedouin swords.

From a distant dune Nazim Bey stared coldly at the massacre. He turned to Sultan Ahmed and said with forced calm:

"Are you satisfied now? Why don't you call your angel? This should be a lesson to you, Ahmed el Sheerife."

The Senoussi chieftain bowed his head.

"I was wrong, Turk," he said. "Have your own way."

"Too late," Ahmed replied. "We ran against an impregnable position. Let us try to retire as we can, and hope that the tribesmen will not desert our flag."

He snapped an order. His staff of Turkish officers galloped to the retreating Bedouin and Air tribesmen. The three mountain batteries composing the Senoussi artillery opened fire against the gorge. Their ill-aimed volleys exploded too high above the Touareg and failed to inflict any serious damage.

TARVER and Gerard gazed exultantly at the Senoussi retreat.

"To launch a pursuit now would be dangerous, because the enemy is still full of fight," Gerard chuckled, rubbing his hands. "But when victory and pillage become impossible, Bedouins quickly become disheartened. A retreating Bed-

ouin host is doomed. I would not be surprised if before the dawn tomorrow most of these warriors desert Sultan Ahmed."

"I agree with you," Tarver acknowledged. "I would not risk for anything in the world an immediate pursuit."

But Tarver was reckoning without Touareg foolhardiness. A sudden uproar among the Taitoqs made him jerk in the saddle and stare aghast at the center. In spite of the frantic commands of Vella, the Taitoqs were leading their horses forward and leaping to the saddle; their piercing battle-yells rent the hair.

INSTANTLY Tarver spurred at top speed to stop them; but when he reached the Taitoq line, the whole embattled tribe was already charging like an avalanche toward the desert, so frenzied with warlike fury that Tarver had to rein in his horse to avoid being ridden down.

The Taitoq charge threw into turmoil the whole Touareg array. At the opposite end of the line Brigaud and his soldiers found difficulty keeping them in the ravines where Tarver had ordered them to hide.

The battle-cries of the Taitoqs warned the Bedouins that the Touareg had launched a pursuit. The followers of Sultan Ahmed were retreating not because they felt that they were defeated, but for the simple reason that they considered the Touareg position impregnable. If they had been allowed to retire undisturbed, a sullen discouragement would have got hold of them in a few hours. But the Touareg attack seemed to them a challenge to try once more their mettle, and a chance to fight the enemy in the open. They turned like a multitude of angry wasps.

From the top of his dune Nazim observed the senseless Touareg charge.

"By Allah," he said, "this battle is going to be a succession of blunders on both sides. The Frenchmen who must be among the Touareg are having as much trouble with the crazed Hoggar warriors as I have with Ahmed. Tauret Effendi," he commanded the senior officer of the regulars, "go to stop with your men the Touareg attacking our left. Rout them thoroughly, sweep through the Touareg right wing, then turn and strike at the rear of the center."

Tauret shouted an order. His troopers split in three orderly divisions; their well-drilled horses increased the pace without urging. A quarter of a mile farther, two squadrons leaped from their

mounts and were quickly arrayed by their officers in two consecutive bodies of riflemen. The first dismounted squadron hastily assembled a dozen machine-guns and opened fire.

But quick as it had been, the whole maneuver had taken precious time; when the machine-guns began firing, less than two hundred yards separated the Touareg from the Senoussi ranks. At that distance not even modern weapons can stop a cavalry charge; in spite of terrific losses, the Hoggar warriors reached the machine-guns, slaughtered their crews and routed the whole squadron.

But the second dismounted division poured a withering fire on the surviving Touareg and broke their charge; while the scattered remains of the Touareg force tried to rally, the third mounted squadron attacked them furiously and rode them down almost to a man. Instantly Tauret saw his chance. Without losing a moment, he ordered his men to follow, and spurred toward the position held by the few meharists of Gerard.

At the center Touareg and Bedouins fought desperately, enveloped by great clouds of dust. From the top of the slope leading to the gorge of Assakao, Tarver gazed anxiously at that fierce, disordered conflict. He turned to Vella, and said:

"The Senoussi are too many. We can never win using cold steel. How shall we extricate the Taitoqs from that mess?"

BEFORE Vella could answer, a French sergeant rode up to them.

"I come from Lieutenant Brigaud," he said, bringing his hand to the visor of his cap. "The Lieutenant is unable to hold the Tedjehe any longer. He wants to know where a Tedjehe charge could do the most damage."

The Senoussi artillery was lowering its fire. Shrapnel was beginning to spray the gorge with hundreds of bullets.

"Tell Brigaud to get at that artillery, if he can," Tarver snapped.

The sergeant saluted, turned about his horse and spurred toward the Tedjehe position.

Tarver stared anxiously to the left of the gorge. He saw Brigaud, specklike in the distance, enter the desert at the head of the Tedjehe. A few minutes later he disappeared with his men behind a squat line of dunes.

A few minutes passed. Suddenly a burst of firing echoed from the rear of the Senoussi line. A short while later the dull thud of a distant volley split the air.



The report had barely died out when white puffs of exploding shrapnel appeared above the dune where the green banner of Sultan Ahmed whipped the breeze. A swarm of Senoussi Mrbets and chieftains, unlike in the distance, darted away from there as fast as their horses could carry them.

Tarver sighed relievedly.

"I can't praise enough the ordnance which includes gunnery practice in the drill of the regular meharistes," he reflected. "The captured Senoussi artillery is now putting to flight the very staff of Sultan Ahmed."

THE capture of the artillery brought a sudden result. The Senoussi regulars desisted from their attack against Gerard's position, and hurried back toward the rear of the Senoussi lines.

"We must now disentangle the Taitoqs and bring them to their former positions," Tarver said. "We will then enclose the Senoussi in a circle of fire."

"It would be the best plan, but I am sure that that fellow there is up to no end of trouble," Vella drawled, pointing at Akhmouk, who had clambered out of the ravine and was glowering at them.

"What do you want, Akhmouk?" Tarver scowled.

"Must we hide behind the rocks like lizards while the other Touareg are reaping glory under our very eyes?" the chieftain replied angrily.

"You must obey, if you want to win!"

"We will not follow your words," Akhmouk raged. "With or without you, my men will attack the Senoussi."

"Just as I thought," Vella commented, shrugging his shoulders. "What shall we do, Tarver?"

"What can we do?" snarled Tarver. "Touareg rashness decides to risk all in a monster charge. We must lead them or lose their respect and support."

"*Alea jacta est!*" Vella muttered. "This is not a regular battle; it is a nightmare. God only knows what will come out of this mess."

The Touareg were leading their horses out of the ravine. Tarver and Vella unsheathed their swords, spurred their mounts and rode swiftly toward the plain below.

Tarver yelled to the Touareg to follow, and turned on the saddle to see if they would obey his order. The big, long-limbed gray charger of Akhmouk galloped close to the heels of his horse. The fierce eyes of the chieftain shone through the slit of his *litham*.

"Don't worry, Akbar," he shouted as if divining Tarver's thought. "As long as you lead them where they can bring their swords into play, the Touareg will follow you to a man."

Tarver had to make the best of this disastrous undertaking. He rode in a wide semicircle around the thick clouds of dust enshrouding the Taitoqs and those Senoussi who were fighting mingled with them: thus he turned the flank of the Senoussi irregulars, and arrived like a bolt out of a clear sky on a multitude of Bedouin tribesmen who were rallying behind them, and with his Touareg he swept them back in a furious *mêlée*.

For a few minutes the Senoussi appeared on the verge of a complete rout; but once more the unruliness of the Touareg limited initial success. Deaf to the bugles calling a rally, which would have enabled Tarver to launch a final and decisive compact charge, the veiled tribesmen spread mingled with their enemies over a wide stretch of desert.

The ground resounded with the pounding of thousands of hoofs; the noise of clashing steel, shouts, cries became deafening. With the Senoussi quickly restoring the balance, the conflict became a rapid sequence of disconnected actions.

Several Touareg groups kept on advancing steadily, tearing down all opposition; but almost as many were giving way in front of sustained Bedouin rushes. Storms of warriors who had swept all opposition in front of them emerged suddenly from thick clouds of dust floating above the battlefield and routed with

fierce charges squads of enemies who were pursuing some of their fellow-tribesmen; then with ranks swollen by their rescued friends, they cantered on toward another victory or to their doom.

His sword red to the hilt, his arms and shoulders splashed with blood, Tarver fought half-blinded by the dust and almost deafened by the din. He saw Akhmouk open a lane among the Bedouins with great blows of his two-handed sword; then a stream of friends and foes rushed between them and hemmed Tarver in so closely that, unable to bring his sword into full play, he had to club down with the pommel a huge white-capped Aïr who had clutched at him with one hand, trying to stab him with the other.

The next moment, in one of those strange shifts so typical of cavalry conflicts the frenzied tribesmen galloped to the right and to the left, away from him.

He slowed his horse to a trot, rose in his stirrups and tried to make out how the battle was going on. All around, confused groups of fighting tribesmen appeared hazily amidst eddies of thick dust.

SUDDENLY a large body of white-capped Aïr warriors tore through the tribesmen fighting on a dune about a hundred yards to his right, and rode toward him. Gripping his sword nervously, Tarver rapidly glanced to his left and rear to see if any Touareg band was coming to help the handful of warriors who followed him.

With a pounding of his heart, he perceived Raidane and a party of Imemans coming at top speed from the opposite direction. Forgetting the numbers of the Aïr, Tarver was instantly gripped by the fear that the enemy would unhorse and ride down Raidane; he must break their first and most dangerous impact, even at the cost of his life and of the life of his followers; so he spurred against them.

At the head of the Aïr rode a light-skinned mulatto of enormous proportions. A thick golden necklace surrounded his brawny throat, and the pommel of the sword chained to his wrist was of solid gold. It was Chaanga, supreme chief of the Aïr. His glaring eyes narrowed to slits fixed on Tarver, he rode crouching in the saddle with his sword lifted, ready to strike.

Riding a few paces ahead of their respective horsemen, Tarver and Chaanga were the first to clash. . . . Every one who has taken part in actual mounted

encounters will bear witness that chiefly on account of the fast pace of the horses, the rider has no time to think; he must rely on instinct and training.

With a lightning move Tarver caught Chaanga's saber-stroke on his own sword, lowered his weapon and thrust him through. Chaanga's eyes immediately rolled and became glassy; and almost instantly the fast pace of the two opposing horses drove Tarver's sword-guard against Chaanga's transfixed body, which was carried by the impact over the crupper of his own mount.

Tarver wrenched his sword free, throwing the slain chieftain under the hoofs of the following Touareg horses; the next moment he catapulted with his men against the enemy horsemen and smashed a gap through them. The Imemans, coming at top speed, split the Aïr into two sections; demoralized by the death of their leader, the Aïr squadron gave way.

But elsewhere things were not going so well for the Touareg. Far in front of him Brigaud's men were busy wrecking the levers and percussion apparatus of the guns. Having fired all the shells captured with the batteries, and being sorely pressed, Lieutenant Brigaud was disabling the guns before giving them up.

With their habitual recklessness, the Touareg had scattered among the superior numbers of their foes. Their lathered horses having grown too weary to charge, they were now almost helpless against the counter-attacks of the Bedouin and Aïr tribesmen.

With the deadly tenacity of the Arab wounded, Bedouins crawled among the heaps of slain men and horses; creeping under the Touareg chargers, they slashed at their bellies with their daggers, or grasped their guns with trembling fingers and sniped at the hated Touareg.

Vella had rallied a few score warriors and was sabering a way toward the gorge. His retreat was perforce slow, because he was continually harassed by rushes of mounted Bedouins and the tenacious resistance of bands of Senoussi on foot.

A SQUAD of tribesmen, easily recognizable as Taitoqs, by the embroideries on their tunics resembling St. Andrew's crosses, galloped wearily past.

"What news of Sadji?" Raidane cried anxiously.

"Sadji is dead, with the flower of our tribe," a Taitoq replied. "We are wounded; we are weary and helpless. Allah has forsaken the people of the Hoggar."

Several gesticulating marabouts were rallying swarms of Bedouin and Air warriors around a distant dune. Tarver indicated these to Raidane and said tensely:

"They will soon swoop on us. We could never stop them on the desert. Let us go back to the gorge."

WITH Tarver leading the way, the Touareg began to retreat. Luckily, the Senoussi were so busy harrying the Touareg on the plain that they neglected the gorge. The parties of Tarver, Vella and Brigaud arrived there almost simultaneously; altogether they were less than one thousand warriors, most of them slightly wounded. With these unsteady remains of the proud Touareg army, Tarver established a new battle-line on the rugged brim of rocks. Brigaud's hip was deeply cut by a lance-stroke. In spite of the excruciating pain, he had succeeded in bringing back the survivors of his force, but the loss of blood had weakened him so that he collapsed. Tarver ordered him carried to a kind of dressing-station which a few Targuias had mustered deep in the gorge, a half-mile west of the battle-line.

Akhmouk had been the last to recognize the need of seeking shelter behind the protecting rocks of their former position, but was finally retreating with his battle-worn men when the horde mustered by the marabouts came yelling to the charge. And at this Akhmouk threw all caution to the wind, turned about and spurred against the Senoussi. His men urged their horses after him, but the lathered beasts were thoroughly exhausted and unable to charge. The impact of a body of cavalry ten times their number swept them like dry leaves; and the Senoussi pushed toward the gorge, driving before them Akhmouk's routed force.

"Fire! Shoot down friends and foes, but stop that horde! Stop them, for God's sake!" Vella shouted, fearing that human avalanche would carry away the Touareg center; but the Touareg lined on the slope glared at him defiantly and made ready their lances. One cried:

"Whatever may happen, we will not risk killing our own. The arm knows where the blow goes, but the bullet is blind!"

Tarver felt sure that the Senoussi attack would crash through the dispirited Touareg ranks and clinch the victory. And then—Gerard did a sublime thing.

A large band of warriors had detached themselves from the main Senoussi body

and were advancing rapidly toward his position. Having less than fifty soldiers with him, Gerard's only chance to keep the attacking enemy at bay lay in showering them with the several hundred bullets that his machine-guns were able to fire in rapid succession, for the fifty rifles of his troopers were insufficient to check the sustained rush of a horde several times their number. Gerard knew that if the Senoussi should storm on his position they would overwhelm him and his men; but he knew, too, that the issue of the battle depended upon what happened in the center; and without wasting a second he turned his machine-guns against the charging Senoussi swarms.

Gerard was unable to see clearly Tarver and Vella, but just the same, as if he wanted to wave them a last good-by, he climbed bare-headed on an outstanding ledge and motioned with his hand. The vision of his gray head and his lanky body above the dark side of the hill, and the smoky haze of the firing guns was destined to haunt Tarver.

The deadly enfolding fire of Gerard's machine-guns stopped the attack of the main Senoussi force, obliged them to disperse all over the plain. A couple of hundred bewildered men of Akhmouk's force found thus a respite, and streamed in utter disorder among the Touareg lines; cursing and using his heavy riding whip freely, Vella obliged them to turn about and join the defence.

But Tarver's eyes were turned on Gerard's position, which already swarmed with the red fezzes of the Senoussi regulars and the burnouses of the Bedouins. Too late the machine-guns were turned against them. A single blast rattled; then the Senoussi charged on the summit, where a confused mass of men appeared struggling for a while.

A fierce shout rose; the limp body of a man with dangling arms suddenly loomed, lifted on the points of swords and shiny gun-barrels. The Senoussi kept it hovering for a while as if wanting everybody to see—then let it drop in their midst.

A HAND grasped Tarver's shoulder; he turned and looked into the flaming eyes of Vella.

"Did you see his gray hair, his uniform? . . . It was Gerard they slaughtered!" the Corsican raged. An instant they stood with tears in their eyes, deaf to the uproar all around them.

"We've a personal score to settle with the Senoussi now," Tarver said at length.

"The sun is still high; something tells me we've a chance yet."

"Gerard's machine-guns are not being turned against us," Vella observed. "He must have smashed them right under the nose of the Senoussi rushing to kill him."

IT was late in the afternoon; the sun haze was giving place to a softer, steadier light. The Senoussi were again rallying half a mile away from the gorge; their multi-colored garments loomed vividly against the dunes and the heaps of dead men and horses sprawled on the sands. Suddenly Raidane pointed at the plain below and shrieked:

"Look there, Tarver!"

Akhmouk had emerged from a saddle of ground halfway between the Touareg and the Senoussi lines. It was apparent that he was sorely hurt, for he groped and stumbled on like a drunken man; he advanced a few paces under a hail of Senoussi bullets, then suddenly he collapsed face down on the sand. For a few moments he remained motionless; then he stirred, tried to rise and fell again.

Seething with excitement, the tribesmen called to each other, pointing at Akhmouk.

"Sadji is dead. If Akhmouk survives, he will become chief, and most likely will turn the Touareg against the French. . . . And yet," Tarver thought, "I can't let him die like a trapped beast." He turned to the Touareg and shouted: "Volunteers to bring him in!"

To his amazement, nobody stepped forward.

"No use, Tarver!" Vella's voice lashed like a whip. "This rabble is thoroughly cowed. The best of the veiled tribes are dead on the sands below. These rats are only the dregs of their people."

Spoken in Tamashek, his scornful words brought an angry grumble from the tribesmen. A couple of Touareg came forward protesting that they were ready to go. Vella noticed their unsteady legs, their tunics clogged with blood, and motioned them to remain.

"You are wounded; you cannot go. If no able-bodied Targui wants to rescue his stricken leader, I will go for him." He turned to Tarver, and his lips curled in a reckless smile. "I know you are more than willing to come along," he said. "But you're in charge here, you can't leave this array of veiled idiots. . . . Make room, dogs!" he snarled. He struck with his whip at a warrior who lingered in making way for him, and

ran down the slope toward the place where Akhmouk lay wounded.

Bedouin bullets ricocheted around him, but Vella seemed to have a charmed life. He reached Akhmouk, and lifted him over his shoulders; for a moment he tottered unsteadily under the huge weight of the wounded leader; then he braced himself and retraced his steps toward the Touareg position.

A growl of shame, then a thundering cheer arose from the ranks of the Hoggar warriors. Like a surging wave they ran to meet Vella, lifted him and Akhmouk onto their sinewy shoulders, and carried them back to the plateau.

A red blot spread on Vella's tunic. He was pale, and his breath came in gasps. "Just a flesh-wound," he said to Tarver, who gazed anxiously at his injured side. "But I'm laid low just the same."

While Raidane ministered to Akhmouk's wounds, Tarver busied himself with the Corsican. Vella's injury was not fatal, but the bullet had carved a furrow in the muscles beneath his right armpit and was lodged so deeply that Tarver was unable to extract it. The shock and the loss of blood finally overcame Vella, who lost consciousness.

In spite of his three gaping wounds, fierce Akhmouk was still conscious and snarling. He asked to be propped in a sitting position against a boulder, and glared from there at the gathering enemy.

The Senoussi were rallying slowly; the wild and inaccurate Touareg fire seemed unable to impress them. Scowling and biting his lips nervously, Tarver waited for the crucial moment when Sultan Ahmed's flag would again whip the breeze and the swarthy Senoussi avalanche rush howling toward the gorge again.

Tarver knew that their enormous losses and the prolonged fighting had demoralized the Senoussi as well as the Touareg. Desert battles are usually decided in a few minutes, seldom lasting more than one hour. But this battle of Assakao had raged during the whole afternoon. The evident indecision of the Senoussi proved that their ardor had suffered a set-back; their next assault would indubitably be the last one. But would the Touareg hold in front of it?

NOW the Senoussi lined up facing the gorge of Assakao; and just in that crucial moment the Touareg fire slackened perceptibly. Tarver snapped a command; the surviving soldiers ran along the whole line asking why the

tribesmen were sparing their fire. They returned to Tarver with the astounding report that the Touareg had thrown away as useless most of their cartridges when they galloped to their ill-fated charge. What ammunition they had saved with them or picked among the dead was now running low.

THINKING the end was near, Tarver went to Raidane.

"Take with you a picked escort, and my two wounded friends Vella and Brigaud, and go as fast as you can to the oasis of Hairane," he said. "Ask the help of General Laperrine. Only Laperrine's troops can stop the Senoussi advance."

"But what will become of you? What will happen to the Touareg warriors?"

"We have no more ammunition, but we will make a stand to give you time to get away. Perhaps we'll succeed in driving back the Senoussi," Tarver lied glibly. "But just the same, Raidane, go to warn General Laperrine."

The Targuia came close to him, and passed her arms around his shoulders.

"How can you ask me to desert you and my people?" she asked. "If you die, I die with you. But is there no hope?"

"Hardly," Tarver replied. "We have one chance in a hundred of holding the Senoussi at bay, let alone of routing them."

A strange light shone in Raidane's eyes.

"If we have to die, let us die gloriously in a charge against our enemies," she said slowly. She pushed Tarver away and called to the Touareg.

"Hear me, warriors of the Hoggar! The Senoussi are coming once more, but it is a vain gesture, because they are tired and down-hearted. You have no more bullets, men of the Hoggar; but you still have your swords. To horse! Let us crush the Senoussi pride under the hoofs of our chargers!"

Only a few score warriors came forward. The bulk of the Touareg force remained close to the shelter of the rocks.

"You were right, Tarver!" Raidane exclaimed. "No power on earth can lead this rabble to victory. But at the least we will show them how to die."

Tarver shrugged. The handful of surviving soldiers grouped around them. With the Touareg who had followed Raidane's call, they leaped to the saddles of their tired horses and clambered down the slope.

"Cursed the name of Allah!" a thundering voice roared behind them. "How

can you let them go alone?" Akhmouk had arisen, clinging to a boulder with trembling hands. Awed, the surrounding Touareg shrank away from him. Howling with rage, Akhmouk lost his balance and rolled to the ground, tearing at his bandages. With a frantic effort he struck savagely at them; half strangled by the blood filling his throat, he groaned: "Leave me alone, cowards! You are dishonoring our race. Let me die, rather than witness your shame."

The tribesmen bowed their heads and muttered uneasily.

"Inshallah!" a husky warrior suddenly shouted. "We have crawled lower than the lizard of the sands!" He beat with both hands at his breast, ran to his horse, swung into the saddle and spurred toward the desert. One by one at first, then like an avalanche breaking loose, the Touareg leaped on their weary chargers and galloped down the slope.

The howling of the Senoussi hordes, the deep masses of swarthy warriors and horses confronting him, appeared to Tarver like a human sea, which must engulf his tiny squadron. To avoid being recognized as a woman, and courting the death of a warrior, Raidane had lifted the *litham* over her face; her fearless eyes met the eyes of Captain Tarver, and he understood that the supreme moment had come. He raised his sword, about to shout the order for that final charge which would carry them to their death, when the pounding of thousands of hoofs shook the ground at his shoulders. Turning, he saw the whole Touareg force coming at top speed. He heard Raidane cry out hysterically. The whole Touareg horde, extending their horses to the limit, had almost overtaken his handful of warriors.

The sword felt light like a feather, the lust of strife made Tarver's blood run faster; with a joyous shout he dug the spurs into his horse, and at the head of the thundering Touareg squadrons, he charged at breakneck speed against the center of the Senoussi array.

BUT the sight of the Touareg coming like a cyclone, when they had expected to carry the gorge easily by storm, was too much for the Senoussi; seized by panic, they turned and fled.

Yelling and waving their swords Nazim and his Turkish aides vainly tried to stop them. The Touareg charge caught the Turks almost alone and engulfed them under a whirl of swords.

From the top of a dune near by Sultan Sidi Ahmed saw the sudden collapse of that invasion in which he had placed so much faith and so many hopes. In despair he covered his face with his mantle. A faithful askari grasped the bridle of his horse and led him quickly away; the stream of the runaways hemmed Ahmed in and carried him toward the east. . . .

The sun was declining rapidly and the sky gleamed like molten copper. Urged by Tarver, the Touareg discarded their worn-out horses for their fast meharas and hurried to the pursuit.

Frenzied by victory, the Touareg ruthlessly chased the remains of Ahmed's forces for a good half the night. Then when the moon climbed high and the much-thinned groups of Senoussi scattered beyond any hope of rally, Tarver granted his men a much-needed rest. As soon as the sentries were posted and the meharas tethered, they threw themselves on the ground and instantly fell asleep.

"AKBAR," a Touareg guard respectfully said to Tarver, "your order was to call you before sunrise. The sky and sands are silver-gray. It is dawn. Awake, Akbar." Roused from his sleep, Tarver glanced at Raidane, who lay close to him, her long hair streaming on the saddle-blanket which they had used as a rough pillow. He shook her gently, caught a happy greeting in her eyes still heavy with sleep.

From gray the vast arena of sky and sand turned first purple, then crimson, tingeing men and beasts alike with a reddish hue; when the golden rim of the sun shot above the horizon, they began their march back toward the gorge of Assakao.

A long swathe of bodies marked their way. Small desert foxes which had been attracted by the scent of blood, scurried for cover. Scraggy-necked vultures flew from among the corpses, and hovered in lazy circles above the riders. . . .

In the cool shade of the gorge they found Akhmouk, Vella and Brigaud lying on piles of rugs.

"Gerard was buried with military honors," Vella informed Tarver. "But I feel that his spirit is still among us."

"The glory of his sacrifice, his memory, will be with us until the end of our days," Tarver replied gravely.

"Akbar," Akhmouk said, his gigantic frame, his veiled face appearing like a striking embodiment of the unfathomable

forces of his mysterious mountains, "I am now Amenokal; but I am not the same man who spoke harshly to you a few days ago.

"We are now united by a brotherhood cemented with the blood of friends. You may tell General Laperrine that the alliance stands, that Moussa ag Amastane's policy still rules the Hoggar. This is my word, Tarver."

The meharas of an escort of picked Touareg that Akhmouk had ordered for Tarver stood ready a few paces away. Far behind them, under the supervision of Touareg guards who from time to time prodded them unmercifully with lances, the prisoners were digging an immense grave, semicircular in form, with an opening facing the east. The Touareg dead were to be buried there. Near the entrance of the gorge still other prisoners were piling high the heaps of booty.

"It has been a mighty *razzour*," Raidane said with tears in her eyes. "These our dead warn us that all human glory is ephemeral. But until I die, your memory will be with me, Tarver."

They were out of hearing of the others.

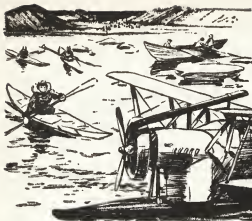
"I will come back for you, Raidane!" Tarver insisted.

"Don't!" Raidane replied passionately, with a fiery toss of her head. "Back in the night of time, our ancestors were kindred. But an immense number of years, and the desert, has made my race very different than yours. I am a woman of the tribes; I could never fit among your people.

"Do not decide before weighing the consequences of your choice. If you feel sure that you could be happy wearing the takarbast of a Targui, come; you will find me waiting for you. But if the ties of your race hold you, don't feel bound to me in any way. May Allah bless you, Tarver."

IT was growing dark, and the red lights of scores of campfires shone all around them. Tarver climbed to the high wooden saddle and the camel arose with a rocking motion.

With a soft padding of hoofs the column clambered up the steep soil of the gorge. Tarver waved at the immobile form of Raidane, who in the moonlight appeared surrounded by a misty halo. Then a bend of the road blotted her from view, and the dreary loneliness of the mountain night closed around him.



Flying

ONE of the most interesting stories I have ever seen in BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE was published more than a year ago. It told of a band of Norsemen who penetrated westward as far as Minnesota, and explained how that was possible: the explorers simply sailed southward to the "foot" of Hudson's Bay, then continued in a smaller boat up the Red River of the North—a voyage of two weeks.

This was of particular interest to me because I was born in Norway, and because I was at that time planning to retrace by plane the legendary route followed by Leif Ericsson, the discoverer of North America. My sole reason for learning to fly was so I could make this voyage by air. That was in 1928.

At first I planned to hop alone, non-stop, to Norway. In 1932 I made the attempt—and came to grief. During the next three years I saved toward the purchase of a new plane, learned all I could about weather and flying conditions in the Greenland area, and finally made preparations to hop off in July, 1935. I found that ships were going to Angmagsalik, on the east coast of Greenland, in the summer of 1934, and that it would be possible to ship gasoline, oil and supplies there, and to Julianehaab, on the southwest coast, after permission had been obtained for the plane to land.

My plane was a Loening amphibian, to which I gave the Norwegian form of Leif Ericsson's name. It's cruising radius was less than a thousand miles, so it was necessary to make the flight in easy stages. It also seemed advisable to take a radio operator. I believed my adventure would demonstrate the feasibility of the northern route. Finally, I wanted to visit my father and mother on their farm in the vicinity of Bergen—and what

could be more dramatic than dropping in on them, after an absence of years, right out of the sky?

Of course, it wasn't as simple as all that; months of study and preparation were necessary. Fuel and oil were shipped to various points a year in advance. Requests for permission to fly over Greenland, Canada and Iceland were made through the Department of State weeks before the flight began. More than a year had elapsed since I had passed a blind-flying test, so it was necessary for me to undergo another. My plane license had to be renewed, and a new flying permit obtained. The Danish Government required a deposit of approximately two thousand dollars to defray the cost of a rescue expedition in Greenland, should one be necessary. (This was returned to me later.) Another requirement was a medical certificate, showing that my radio operator and I were free from contagious disease.

Those were just a few of the things to be done. Then there was the christening of the red-white-and-blue plane, which was done by my wife; the buying and testing of food and equipment, and so forth. Inasmuch as we would have no use for the wheels on the all-water route, we took them off, and thus saved one hundred and fifty pounds of dead weight. We installed blind-flying instruments, so that we could fly in fog or darkness, without going into a tail-spin. And maybe those instruments weren't worth their weight in gold! Without them we undoubtedly would have crashed into the ocean; for a man's reactions are not to be relied upon when flying in fog, no matter how good his sense of equilibrium.

REAL EX.

the Viking Trail

"If the truth were known!" How often have you wondered about the personal story behind some bare newspaper record? In recognition of this interest, we print here five stories of Real Experience. (For details of this contest, see page 3.) First we have the story of a young Norwegian-American who flew from New York to Norway, reversing the route of Leif Ericsson in the Tenth Century—as told to Burt McConnell,

By THOR SOLBERG

Finally the Bureau of Air Commerce passed favorably upon the airworthiness of our plane, the type, engine, route and so forth, and we were ready. Meanwhile the postal authorities of Norway had made for me a special stamp for marking all letters and cards carried on the flight, for stamp collectors. These, with contributions by various Norwegian-American individuals and societies, helped considerably to finance the flight. We carried food supplies for thirty days, a motion-picture camera, a shotgun, rifle, fishing-tackle, rubber boat, charts, maps.

WE made our first attempt on July 17, 1935, but found the machine tail-heavy. There was nothing to do but return to Floyd Bennett Field, on the south shore of Long Island, and rearrange our heavy load. On the following afternoon we got away in good style, and headed up the Hudson River. In the vicinity of Albany we ran into a terrific thunderstorm, but otherwise the flight to Montreal was uneventful. We came down on the St. Lawrence, making the hop in three hours.

Rain and cloudy skies held us at Montreal until early afternoon the following day. Then a gleam of sunlight broke through, and we got ready to take off. We carried a heavy load of gasoline, and as the weather was calm and the surface of the St. Lawrence smooth, we found it difficult to get off the water; a vacuum formed under the hull. Finally, after a long run, a steamer came along; the swells broke the vacuum, and we were able to rise. We headed for Seven Islands, Quebec, six hundred miles to the northeast, and arrived there after

a flight of less than five hours over gorgeous river and forest scenery.

The next day, July 20th, we made the short hop to Havre St. Pierre in an hour and a half; and on Sunday, the 21st, left early in the morning for Cartwright, on the Labrador coast. It was nice to find, upon our arrival, a cordial note from the Grenfell Mission people, inviting us to "supper."

So far, we had come seventeen hundred miles in three flying days; we were on schedule. But now we were held up by the worst enemy of flyers—fog. If it wasn't foggy at Cartwright, it was thick at the other end—Julianehaab, Greenland. Our course lay across Davis Strait, an over-water stretch of seven hundred miles. We waited at Cartwright an entire week for favorable weather. At last we took off; the fog was reported by the Julianehaab radio station to be lifting. The season was getting late; ice might form in the Greenland area any time after the first of August, and it was now July 28th.

The flight from Labrador to Greenland might well be described as a nightmare. Our radio went out of commission in the early stage of the flight. Fog blanketed the North Atlantic to a height of four thousand feet. At no time did we see land, sky or water until we were within sixty miles of Greenland; then ice-covered mountains came into view.

In the neighborhood of Cartwright the fog was very dense. First we flew about two hundred feet above the sea, in order to check our drift; then went to one thousand feet, and flew at that altitude for four hours; then we went to four thousand feet. Meanwhile the magnetic compass swung as much as fifty degrees. Head-winds during the entire flight cut down our speed, and tended to carry us

PERIENCES

off our course. Whenever we tried to climb above the fog, ice would collect on the wings. Since this interfered seriously with the aerodynamical qualities of the wings, we had to get rid of it by gliding to within a hundred feet of the water, where the air was warmer.

I HAD never flown over water seven hundred miles in a straight line, under favorable conditions, much less in fog, so it was with some trepidation that I approached the Greenland coast. I was not sure that we had stayed on the course; we might be fifty miles north or south of Julianehaab. But luck was with us; we completed the jump across the waters of Davis Strait in nine hours. And we hit the village right on the nose. The people here and at Cartwright hours before had given up hope.

At Julianehaab we were welcomed in the typical fashion of the Arctic by Eskimos and officials of the Danish Government. They came out in rowboats and skin-covered kayaks. We anchored the plane, arranged for fuel and oil, and went ashore in the Government boat. There we were met by the wireless operator, who volunteered to help fix our radio. Cut off from the outside world for months at a time, the people of the village turned out in their Sunday best to see the white visitors from civilization.

We left Julianehaab on the morning of July 30th, swung to the southeast past Cape Farewell, then turned to the northeast in the direction of Angmagsalik. The magnificent ice-cap of Greenland, 7,500 feet high, was in sight during the entire flight of nine hours. And when we arrived late that night, it was still light enough to read a newspaper. The sea ice was well inshore, however, so that it was necessary for us to climb to ten thousand feet to look for a landing at Angmagsalik. When we were within twenty-five miles of the village, we sent a wireless message, telling them that we were going to land. But it soon became apparent that we could not come down among the ice-floes that pressed against the shore; it would be necessary to fly inland and alight on one of the fjords.

We picked a long, still sheet of water some twelve miles from the village, and brought down our sturdy but obsolescent Loening. It was rather ticklish business, as there were many partly submerged ice-cakes in the fjord. However, we had no other choice; the sea, for miles in all directions, was filled with pack ice.

We were now approximately at the halfway point.

The officials at this desolate Greenland outpost had received our message, and had watched us circling about for a landing. Soon they were picking their way among the floes, bringing launches to take us to the village. We anchored the plane, but the hook would not hold, and we were in grave danger of going on the rocks. In fact, the plane drifted perilously near shore, and it was necessary for me to jump overboard, grab the end of the wing, and prevent the plane's destruction, then and there. My radio operator got out the rubber boat, but by the time it was ready, a change came in the wind and the danger passed.

We were taken to the village in a launch, and made arrangements for fuel and oil to be brought back to the plane. Our next destination was Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, but the radio brought us news of fog and unfavorable weather in that area. So we tarried at Angmagsalik for two days. We might have waited another day among these hospitable people had not a sudden change in the wind brought down a field of loosely-scattered ice-floes upon the plane. We had little time to get the plane off the water. The take-off distance was short, and we got out of that fjord with only a few feet to spare.

UNDER ordinary circumstances we would have reached the westerly tip of Iceland in five hours, but in less than an hour we were fighting a fifty-mile head-wind. We decided to land at Bildudal, a fishing village at the north-western tip of Iceland, and go on in the morning.

For the first time since our departure from New York, I felt at home. I found Icelandic was not unlike the Norwegian dialects with which I had been familiar since boyhood, so it was possible to understand these fine, upstanding and independent people. They were hospitable to a fault; one official even insisted that I use his new automobile to drive about the country. Icelandic officials and the Norwegian consul did everything in their power to make our stay comfortable. We overhauled the engine, and I spent the greater part of each day in the meteorological station, studying weather records over a period of years.

Our next destination was Hornafjord, on the southeastern corner of Iceland, a distance of three hundred miles. We

left in the afternoon of August 10th, contemplating a leisurely hop; but when we reached the vicinity of the Icelandic village, we found the entire coast blanketed by fog, and had to return to Reykjavik. So we flew that day a total of six hundred miles—all to no purpose. On the 11th we again set out, and reached Hornafjord in two hours and a quarter. Fog held us there until the 16th. We made one attempt to reach the Faroe Islands, but were compelled by a heavy storm to return.

The water in the harbor was smooth, early in the morning of the take-off, and we had the same trouble in getting into the air that we had at Montreal. Finally, however, the old Loening got on the step and into the air. For the entire three hundred and fifty miles between Iceland and the Faroes we battled a head-wind, but we managed to get there after a flight lasting three and a half hours. A reception by the entire village awaited us. At two-thirty P.M. we took off.

WE were now on the last leg of our 5,300-mile journey—a leg 550 miles in length. For the first time a light tail-wind helped us on our way, so that we were able to come into the harbor of Bergen, Norway, with a flourish just at dusk. It seemed to me that we were coasting downhill on this last leg, and my eagerness to reach the city that was at one time the maritime center of the world can easily be imagined when I tell you that my five brothers and three sisters were waiting to greet me. Moreover, my parents lived more than a hundred miles from Bergen, and I would fly down to see them next day.

My radio operator and I were astounded at the activity of the harbor boats as we circled the city for a landing; there seemed to be dozens of them. But they made a lane in which we landed.

My great ambition in life, to fly back to the country of my birth, was thus fulfilled. The flight cost thirty thousand dollars of my own money, but it was worth it. . . .

We were taken in hand by the officials of Bergen, and the following week I was invited to Oslo by King Haakon, of Norway. The King asked me many questions, especially about navigation, on which he is well posted. And while the average interview with His Majesty lasts three minutes, he kept me there for three-quarters of an hour. The audience with the King was followed by the pres-

entation of the Gold Medal of the Norwegian Aëro Club, and by the equally rare Gold Medal of the Royal Danish Aëronautical Society for being the first to fly from the United States to the mainland of Norway.

I can say without boasting that our arrival in Bergen created the greatest stir in public life that Norway had known in many years. Months were required for the Vikings to make a voyage to North America; but we were only fifty-nine hours in the air. During forty of those hours we were out of sight of both land and sea, and thus compelled to fly blind—that is, solely by instruments.

We had followed the entire route as we had planned it, and the fact that we were returning a visit made by Leif Ericsson to North America in the Tenth Century appealed to the popular imagination.

We had flown 5,300 miles—more than a third of the distance around the earth at that latitude. We had encountered fog and the elements at their worst, but had come through without injury or mishap. Our flight was more than mere adventure; we like to believe that we have helped to pave the way for a future air route over the top of the world.

All that remains is for an established aviation concern to make a transatlantic air route commercially practicable. It seems to me (and to Stefansson and other authorities on the Arctic) that the northern route has four distinct advantages over the others: You save hundreds of miles; you have better weather conditions, on the average; you have more natural landing-places, both over land and over water; and you have comparatively short over-water hops. Mountains are a handicap in flying—and the mountains of the Arctic are very few and very low. Another advantage is that summer voyages could be made in daylight hours. When fog does exist, it is usually low-lying, so the pilot can fly over it, while precipitation of one kind or another in the Arctic does not vary greatly from the average in the United States.

CERTAINLY the transportation medium of the future is the air. The time has been visualized when Yankee clipper ships of the air will touch the shores of every seafaring nation. When that time comes, my radio operator and I can contemplate with satisfaction our little effort to demonstrate what Stefansson has maintained for years—namely, that it is easier to go east by flying north.

Range Realities

THE J. P. Cattle Company long had enjoyed the free range on Government lands in southwest Kansas; but the year 1905 saw it making a valiant stand against the incoming legions of homesteaders. The comparatively small Krieh ranches, owned by my father and grandfather, bordered the big home ranch of the J. P. company on the west, and the J. P. stock was constantly breaking through our east line fence, releasing my grandfather's cattle, damaging crops, and frequently causing a serious shortage in his supply of water which was pumped by windmills. As a result, the old gentleman cordially hated the J. P. outfit.

The year I was fourteen spring rains brought out an unusually fine crop of buffalo grass, and early in July the J. P. bought several thousand head of long-horn steers to fatten for the fall market.

At the time I was on my father's ranch alone; and against the wishes of Grandfather, I met the herd about ten miles west of our ranch and joined the trail crew to help drive it through. I meant to have a part in bringing across our ranch that great trail herd of wild long-horns. I previously had driven our own cattle out of their path. We took them through easily, and there was practically no damage done to our fences; but I shall never forget how angry Grandfather was when he rode over to see me that evening. He said I was a traitor to him.

I loved and respected the old gentleman; but I was unconvinced and I defended the company; so he rode away vowing that he never wanted to see me again.

Next day Bill Plummer, the manager of the J. P., rode over and offered me the job of watching the new herd, from our ranch, to keep them from making a break for their old range in Colorado.

"It won't interfere with your work for your father," he said, "and anyway, they may cause you some trouble, and I want to see that you're paid something for it."

Although I trembled because of what my grandfather would say, I readily agreed to take the job, for money was scarce, and up to then I had never had more than one dollar in my pocket at one time. For me it was a stroke of good fortune to be put on the pay-roll of the

J. P. Cattle Company at five dollars a week, and have little or nothing to do but serve as a lookout. My father disapproved, but as I had already accepted, he said I should keep my agreement. So I kept my best cow-horse saddled, and watched faithfully to see that none of the wild steers drifted over that way.

The first Sunday following my employment as a J. P. "cowpuncher" was a day of bronco-busting at the J. P. home ranch. A dozen cowboys from the J. P. camp on the Sand Arroyo came up to help with the breaking. I rode over, and was joined by another boy named Earl.

Some twenty of the new horses were herded into one of the corrals. One by one the cowboys roped them and "topped them off." Several were thrown, but none was injured. At last Earl roped his horse, and managed, despite the animal's desperate efforts to throw him, to stay on.

Finally it came my turn, and I was plenty nervous. I had chosen the horse I wanted to ride, but as the bunch was driven past me and I threw my rope, the loop settled over the head of a big bay—the wickedest-looking animal of the lot. It required the efforts of three cowboys to hold him and get him saddled. When he was ready, I leaped into the saddle easily as one of the boys released his ears, then ran for the corral fence on which the others were already perched.

For a brief moment the bronc' seemed to be speculating on what to do first. He stood there, every muscle quiver, forefeet spread wide apart, head down and snorting. Then I tightened my hold on the bridle reins, and that started the show. He took the bit in his teeth, and with head low down between his forelegs, he left the ground like a bullet. He came down with a jolt that jarred me from toenails to cranium. Then he began to buck and sunfish; and the next four or five jumps were made on a spot no larger than a dining-room table. I lost my hat, I lost both stirrups. I grabbed the horn of the saddle and "pulled leather" as if my life depended on it; but I had my spurs firmly hooked in the cinch, and I thought I would be able to stick it out. The cowboys were yelling, and my bronco, frightened by the shouting as

*A bucking horse and then a stampede
made life exciting.*

By
MCKINLEY KRIEGH

well as by the thing on his back, suddenly turned and, still bucking violently, headed for the north side of the corral.

I expected him to turn sidewise along the corral fence, which on that side was about ten feet high and consisted of a double fence of barbed wire filled with soapweed to form a windbreak about two feet wide at the top. I was all set to throw one leg up to escape having it crushed against the windbreak, when what did this bronc' do but stop dead, with his head almost against the fence—but I kept going up and landed on top of the windbreak. For a week afterward there were spots in and about my anatomy which needed repairs.

I HAD been on the J. P. pay-roll two weeks before anything else happened. It was midafternoon; and a thunder-storm was threatening. I was engaged in some chores about our ranch, when I noticed a cloud of dust to the southeast. A moment later a stream of cattle came pouring over the hill, headed for Grandfather's line fence. I ran to the stable for my horse. When I looked again, the leaders were nearing the fence. I thought they would turn and come on around; but when they reached the fence, they went right through it. Instead of slackening their pace, they increased it, and soon the entire herd was stampeding across my grandfather's north pasture.

By that time I was in the saddle and riding hard to overtake them. As I went through the north pasture gate, I felt a splash of rain, but I had no time to think of the approaching storm. I rode at racing speed for a mile and a half before I caught up with the leaders. The pounding of hoofs made the earth quake, and this and the bawling of the maddened steers shut out the thunder of the storm. I could not turn the herd.

The leaders were headed directly into a scattered herd of our own domesticated stock. These were beginning to mill around nervously, all except one old bull that I had named "Hippo." Old Hippo had his head down and was bellowing with all his might, and pawing a cloud of dirt into the air. He did not wait for the running steers to reach him. Instead, he



started for them. As he lumbered up alongside the first steer, he turned and with his left horn seemed to lift that steer right off of the ground. He joined in the stampede and kept horning into the leaders right and left, bellowing and bawling as if to challenge the whole wild herd to a free-for-all battle. Just then the storm broke.

It struck with the full force of a gale. There was a blinding torrent of rain and a pelting barrage of hail, full in the face of the stampeding herd. The stampede stopped as if held by a magic wall. It was no trick after the storm had passed to drive the herd back to the J. P. ranch.

On the way back I stopped to inspect the damage to Grandfather's fence: The barbed wire was torn away from the posts for nearly a quarter of a mile, and the three strands were so broken and twisted that the fence would have to be replaced with new wire, and some of the posts were broken off. I reported this to Bill Plummer, who assured me:

"Mack, we'll fix that all up. We'll put up a new fence for him, and pay for any other damage. I'll go over and see the old gent tomorrow, and promise him that we will keep our cattle off of his ranch and help him in the future all we can."

It turned out that Grandfather had seen the stampede, and would have come to my assistance if the storm had not intervened. He was so glad that no harm had come to me that he forgot his grievances, listened to Bill's overtures, and accepted them. That ended his opposition to the J. P. company. . . .

That fall the steers were driven to the railroad and shipped to the Kansas City stockyard. Next winter was so severe that range cattle were practically wiped out, their bodies being strewn where they had dropped in the snowdrifts. The loss to the J. P. company was terrific, and they never recovered from it.

Fighting John

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon



A*FTER the work in China which won for McCloy his first Congressional Medal of Honor, he had more spine-tickling adventures in the Philippines, Japan and other parts of the Far East. Later, when back in the Navy, he was with that famous expedition sent to Morocco to follow up President Theodore Roosevelt's cablegram: "Perdicaris Alive, or Raisuli Dead." But to hurry along to the adventure which resulted in his getting a second Congressional Medal of Honor: it was when he was with the landing-force sent to capture the Mexican city of Vera Cruz. And here's that tale summarized in his own words:*

T*HE Florida had been lying at Vera Cruz for three weeks when, on the morning of April 21, we received stirring orders to organize the landing-party. In the lively fighting that ensued in the next forty-eight hours, I received my second wound and was recommended for a second Medal of Honor.*

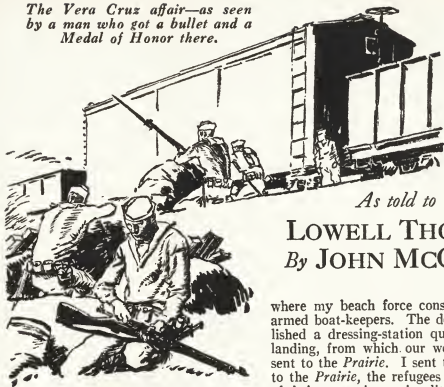
There was nothing mysterious in the political situation that led to our occupation of the principal port of Mexico by force of arms. President Madero had

been overthrown in February, 1913, by Victoriano Huerta, who had been his Minister of War. Madero was killed, and Huerta was held responsible for his death—although to this day, proof has not been produced that he killed him.

President Wilson would not recognize Huerta, and hampered him to the extent of an embargo on shipments of arms to Mexico. But when Villa and Carranza, in the north, started a revolution against Huerta, the embargo was lifted so that they could receive arms. Relations between Mexico and the United States were further aggravated by the arrest of an American naval officer and a number of sailors at Tampico.

*With diplomatic affairs at the boiling-point, it was decided in Washington to prevent the landing at Vera Cruz of seventeen million rounds of rifle ammunition that had been ordered by Huerta. It was coming on the *Ypiranga* of the Hamburg-American Line, and had not reached port when we received orders to go ashore and take possession of the Customs pier and Customhouse. We landed in the face of stiff opposition, occupying Vera Cruz in two days, a job*

*The Vera Cruz affair—as seen
by a man who got a bullet and a
Medal of Honor there.*



As told to

LOWELL THOMAS

By **JOHN MCCLOY**

that had taken General Scott three weeks in 1847. The *Ypiranga* landed her ammunition at Port of Mexico, about one hundred miles south of Vera Cruz.

It was about nine o'clock on the morning of April 21, while we were preparing for another norther, that the order was passed: "Aw-a-a-a-y, landing force!" The force consisted of three hundred sailors, and was referred to as a battalion. As chief boatswain, I was also beachmaster, and my duties as such were to take charge of the landing-place after the landing was effected, put the beach in a condition of defense in case of retreat, take charge of prisoners and refugees, and forward supplies to the firing-line.

Three hundred marines were also landing from the U.S.S. *Prairie*, anchored inside the breakwater at the time. The marines landed at the outer end of the railroad pier and marched to the railway station under cover of cars, machinery and sides of the pier. The sailors landed at the bulkhead between the railroad pier and the Customhouse and advanced to the railroad station across an open square. The Mexicans opened fire on the sailors, and a number of them were hit before they occupied the station and the American consulate across the street.

In a short time prisoners, refugees, and wounded were coming to the water-front,

where my beach force consisted of unarmed boat-keepers. The doctors established a dressing-station quite near the landing, from which our wounded were sent to the *Prairie*. I sent the prisoners to the *Prairie*, the refugees to the ships of their respective nationalities, or to the *Mexico* of the Ward Line.

It was soon learned that the six hundred men on shore could not carry out their mission, which was to occupy the Customhouse and prevent the landing of arms from the German freighter. Reinforcements of three hundred sailors from the *Utah* were landed about three o'clock in the afternoon. This force from the *Utah* took a position on the left of the *Florida's* sailors, leaving a gap of two city blocks in which there were piles of junk, shacks, railroad-cars and other cover. When the Mexicans began to move into this section, which was between my position and our forces, I sent a messenger to inform the officer, who was in command ashore. He sent back word for me to stay where I was, that it was perfectly safe. I sent a message suggesting he send an armed detail back to the water-front to make it safe for both of us.

He sent us a young officer and sixteen men, and came down with them himself. Instead of taking up a position to defend the landing-place, they started to walk into an ambush, and I asked the officer not to let them go. He said he did not believe there were any Mexicans in that area. To show him, I ordered three steam launches mounting one-pounder guns to steam along the water-front about one hundred yards off-shore.

We opened fire on the suspected area with our one-pounders, and got a warm response. I was in the leading launch, the *Utah's* next in line. Before we had proceeded a hundred yards the *Utah's* launch was put out of commission and two men in it were wounded. When we were about halfway across the harbor, a bullet struck me in the left thigh; the launch was hit several times, and a bullet cut the main steam line, putting the engine out of commission.

Admiral Fletcher was on the U.S.S. *Prairie* and saw through his glasses what was happening. That ship opened fire over our heads with a three-inch battery. The third launch towed me to a position near the *Prairie*, where I transferred to it and returned to the fight.

We steamed south across the harbor not far from shore, drawing fire from Mexicans in buildings along the water-front, from the Naval Academy and from a fort to the south. Bullets were like hail on the water, but no one else was wounded on the launch, which continued to pepper away with its small gun. Fire from the *Prairie* forced the enemy to cover in about fifteen minutes or so, and I returned to the landing-place. Our boat-ride had demonstrated the strength of the enemy, and the *Prairie's* guns had stopped a turning movement on our position ashore.

My boat's crew were young and full of enthusiasm for the adventure, displaying that well-known gallantry of the American sailor. As I was not knocked off my feet when I was hit, and thinking it might dampen their ardor if they learned about it, I said nothing of my wound until we returned to the beach, where I had a temporary dressing put on it.

The doctors' dressing-station was removed to the railroad station, and I was ordered to abandon my station on the water-front and take a position on the outer end of the railroad pier. Our forces shortened their lines, and when they were drawn in, they left provisions and spare ammunition on the dock. After receiving several orders to leave the water-front, I finally made the Admiral understand that I could not obey his orders to leave until the ammunition and stores were taken care of. This undertaking was considered so dangerous that the man who led the party and brought the ammunition and stores to the railroad station was awarded a Medal of Honor.

I maintained my position at the sea end of the railroad pier and helped in the landing of reinforcements that began to arrive in large numbers around midnight. Among the first to arrive was Major Smedley D. Butler, with marines. The railroad pier was built of solid stone facing, and piles were driven inside for the railroad tracks to rest on. Spaces between were partly filled, leaving deep depressions. When men landed, I would inform the officers of the condition of the terrain they were to march over.

Men from the *Utah* and *San Francisco* started out in the dark, drove the enemy back by hard continuous fighting, and finally occupied the Customhouse. Day-break found them also in the police barracks and in the square in the center of the city. They lost a good many men, because picked marksmen were sniping at them from windows, church towers and other points of vantage. Our men fought from house to house, and in some cases from room to room. A block of houses would be occupied, and all opposition forced out the rear. With their flanks well guarded, the Americans would then attack and mop up another block of houses.

Landing-forces pushed forward as rapidly as they came ashore, and by noon almost five thousand of our men were engaged in cleaning up the town. The stiffest resistance was encountered at the Naval Academy, where the young patriots put up a most heroic defense. They drove back our first lines of attack, and it was only after our ships in the harbor again opened up on the building with three-inch guns that it was taken. With the fall of the Academy, resistance rapidly petered out.

The Mexican loss was estimated at five hundred dead; our casualties totaled nineteen killed and sixty-four wounded. Again, as in China, was demonstrated the fact that a comparatively small force of well-trained troops is superior to a much larger force of ill-trained or untrained fighting men. Men of every nation and breed will fight courageously; but without a knowledge of how to fight, theirs will be a hopeless sacrifice.

THE American side of our battle with the Mexicans was told by Rear Admiral Badger, commander of the Atlantic Fleet, in an order published to all participating units. Under date of April 26, 1914, he said:

"The occupation of the city of Vera

Cruz commenced on the forenoon of April 21 by the naval forces of the United States having been successfully concluded, the Commander-in-Chief desires to congratulate Rear Admiral F. F. Fletcher, in command of the naval forces on shore, and the officers and men of the landing force and of the supporting cruisers for their gallant conduct. The gallantry and expedition of the officers and men engaged in this enterprise, undertaken on the spur of the moment and in the face of adverse conditions, was in keeping with the traditions of the service.

"The Commander-in-Chief wishes to congratulate Rear Admiral Fletcher on the perfect working of the plans prepared by him in anticipation of just such an emergency. The orders for action came with unexpected suddenness and at a time when the naval force off Vera Cruz had been reduced by the exigencies of the service much below its usual strength, but there was no delay. The landing was undertaken immediately with the means at hand; and before the arrival of reinforcing vessels, the Customhouse and that portion of the city essential to its successful occupation were already in the hands of our forces.

"For the subsequent measures and negotiations taken to restore order to the city, renew its ordinary routine of business and pacify its inhabitants, Rear Admiral Fletcher and his officers and men deserve great praise.

"Highest honor is accorded to those who gave up their lives gloriously in the service of their country. The sympathy of the whole fleet goes out to their sorrowing relatives and friends.

"In the occupation of Vera Cruz, the Navy and Marine Corps have carried out successfully and well the duty required of them and once again have demonstrated their preparedness, discipline and fidelity."

I was wounded on the twenty-first; and two days later, after Vera Cruz had been occupied, I went aboard the hospital ship *Solace*. A surgeon extracted the bullet and ordered me to my bunk for a day. When that time had passed, I went down to visit enlisted men who had been wounded. The first one I talked to was Fitzgerald, a sergeant of Marines, who had been hit in the neck with a bullet. "Another inch over, and they'd be takin' me home in a box instead of a stretcher," he said cheerfully.

There was a sailor who had been in the fighting ashore and was struck on the head by a brick knocked from a wall by one of our own shells. He showed no sign of life when he was carried on the ship, and the undertaker had laid him out on a slab for embalming when the "dead man" opened his eyes. Operated on in the ship's hospital, this sailor was walking the decks three days later.

The *Solace* sailed for New York, where after two weeks in the hospital at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, I was restored to duty. In the hospital I received the following extract from a report Admiral Fletcher had sent to the Navy Department, and the Department's comment:

"CHIEF BOATSWAIN JOHN McCLOY, U.S.N., led a flotilla of three picket launches mounting one-pounders along the sea-front of Vera Cruz in front of the Naval School and Customhouse. The launches drew the combined fire of the Mexicans in that vicinity and thus enabled the cruisers to shell them out temporarily and save our men on shore. . . .

"Chief Boatswain John McCloy in addition to his commendation for 'Eminent and conspicuous service in battle,' is deserving of recognition for 'Extraordinary heroism in battle.' During the engagement of the launches under his command he was shot through the thigh but refused to leave his post of duty until the conflict had ceased on the following day.

"The Department concurs with the opinion of Rear Admiral Fletcher and highly commends the fortitude and heroism shown by you in battle. Your conduct on this occasion in remaining at your post of duty for forty-eight hours after having been wounded is in accord with the best traditions of the naval service and I am pleased to inform you that a copy of this letter of commendation will be made part of your service record.

Josephus Daniels."

Prior to 1915 there was no law under which an officer of the navy could be awarded a Medal of Honor. Somewhat more than a year after the law had been changed, I was instructed to report to the cabin of the commanding officer of the U.S.S. *Maine*, on which I was then serving. He simply handed me a package, saying, "There is something in this for you, and here is a receipt for you to sign." Returning to my room, I found that the package contained a Medal of Honor and a letter of transmittal.

Further adventures of this gallant fighter will be described in our next issue.



Salvage!

A fighting job in a Cretan harbor.

By CAPTAIN FRANK SHAW

THE *Mercutio* had been torpedoed when carrying wounded and nurses from Port Saïd to Milo, but her captain had kept her going on her tanks, her double bottom actually, until he was able to run her ashore outside Suda Bay and so save all hands.

The ship herself remained half-submerged, her bows stuck in a rock-cleft, with everything of value stripped from her by the Cretan longshoremen.

In the *Enclave*, I was told to go and look the *Mercutio* over, to see what prospect there was of salvaging the broken hull.

So we took the *Enclave* down to Suda Bay—to find that the torpedoed *Mercutio* had been adopted as a living-place by a whole tribe of longshore Cretans!

When I had my gig lowered out and pulled alongside the wreck, very stark she looked, with her bows down and her stern cocked up, and every fragment of paint rusted off. The Cretans aboard forcibly attempted to prevent my boarding her. However, a bit of bluff, much cajolery, and a reference to the power of the British flag finally got me aboard; at once the chief of the clan offered to sell the ship at a ridiculous price.

On being told that we considered the *Mercutio* still a British possession, he seemed surprised, having assumed that findings were keepings, I suppose.

I explained to the chief—a wiry, white-mustached individual—that I intended, if possible, to get the *Mercutio* patched up and towed off the rocks; he swore that only over his dead body should such an attempt be made unless we paid the fantastic price he demanded. He was in possession; and as a squatter he claimed squatter's rights.

Going to see officials ashore didn't help matters much. The Cretans shrugged; the British scowled. We were becoming a nuisance.

After all negotiations had failed, we decided to try the strong hand. We could not use arms, lest we create international complications; but belaying-pins and such were quite in order.

Since the chance of gaining a footing aboard the stranded *Mercutio* from ship's boats was remote, for the Cretans could take us one by one as we scrambled up the hook-ropes, we decided, after a consultation, to run the *Enclave* alongside the tipped-up stern, and carry the wreck by storm; so under pretence of fishing, we took soundings of the water at the *Mercutio's* stern. I decided to attack at night, when the usurpers were asleep.

Accordingly, at some time shortly after midnight, having hove up one anchor during the day, as if in readiness for sailing, we buoyed and slipped the starboard anchor cable, to avoid noise, and under easy steam sauntered down to cross the *Mercutio's* stern.

As our bow nosed past that tilted stern, we had fenders out to take the impact; the wind drove her neatly down; I dropped the anchor on a short cable, and we grappled the *Mercutio* neatly. But the shudder the wreck gave as we crushed down upon her awakened some of her people, and almost as the first man got over her rail, women and children came screaming up on deck; men appeared; knives were drawn.

I SET up a flare or two aboard the *Enclave* to add to the stir and to show the men where to go; and while some of us shepherded the women into the superstructure, the rest tackled the snarling Cretans, who fought as Cretans do—with tooth and nail, knife and club.

Belaying-pins thwacked on heads; and we began to make a decent clearance.

The squint-eyed chief of the *Mercutio* clan came bald-headed for me, and would have run an eighteen-inch knife around my ribs if the second mate hadn't uppercut him so bitterly that he almost knocked his chin through his crown. We decided to keep him as a hostage.

It was a merry scrap while it lasted; and we expected the police boats to come along and inquire into the noise; but for all the interference we got from shore, Crete might have been a desert island.

When they found the tide was turning against them, a lot of the Cretans went and stowed themselves away in the bunkers and store-rooms, and had to be literally pried loose. Still, we pried them loose and tilted every man over the side as we got him detached. The sea around seemed alive with swimming figures, all of them cursing themselves black in the face. We had won possession of the *Mercutio*.

Our late antagonists swam ashore and possessed themselves of various boats—the harbor was almost full of abandoned ships' lifeboats in which survivors from torpedoed ships had won to safety after their craft had gone to the bottom—and this flotilla now streamed out to tell us what they thought about us. There were a lot of blood-curdling threats, but as we had the upper hand, we could afford to ignore them.

Once daylight came, we were able to make a more exhaustive survey of what we'd won. The *Mercutio* wasn't much of a ship to look at, I'll grant; but apparently the major part of her hull was sound under the rust, and although the Cretans had played hob with her cargo there was a hope that some of it might be salvable. The damage done by the torpedo wasn't easily discernible, as the gaping hole was under water for'ard; but the afterpart of the hull appeared intact.

There was a bit more skirmishing with the pirates, as we dubbed them; but presently they came to see the error of their ways, and even came forward and volunteered to lend a hand in the salvaging if we paid them union rates of pay. This project was scotched by the simple process of telling the squinting chief that he'd get paid handsomely so long as no further trouble happened; but that if trouble did brew up, he'd be boiled in oil.

Having had a bit of diving experience during the war years, and as the *Enclave* carried a diving outfit, I went down in the suit and made a closer investigation of the damage. At first glance it appeared quite complete; a gaping hole through which a motor truck could have been driven showed in her bows. But I had been eyewitness to so many miracles of wartime salvage, when torpedoed ships were patched up and sent back into service, that nothing seemed hopeless.

Since we hadn't the appliances to put a homeward-bound patch on the gaping hole in the bow, it appeared obvious to me that our only hope of salvage was to rely on the bulkheads.

First, though, these had to be shored up. This was done—not an easy task, for the Cretans had stripped the ship down to the bare bones, almost; but we used the *Enclave's* cargo gear to some purpose, and then built a sort of cofferdam into which we poured cement.

Presently we deemed everything was to rights. The next step was to bring the *Mercutio* to an even keel, and that promised to be the trickiest part of the whole business, as, by flooding the after compartments, we might rip the bows clean out of the wreck. The after tanks filled—slowly, on account of the forward tilt. As the stern of the *Mercutio* settled down I held my breath, expecting to hear the screech of tortured metal as the bows fetched away; but nothing of the sort happened. The stern sank, the bows remained fixed. It looked very much as if the *Mercutio* would break her back or part in two; but she was sturdy; though she developed a humped-back look amidships, no steel tore adrift.

ONCE she was on even keel, we made fast our stoutest towing-hawser to her stern and our own, and began to take the strain. It was a difficult task. We increased the strain; nothing happened. We burst a couple of hawser and replaced them. The *Mercutio* remained immovable.

It was necessary to explode a judicious bit of dynamite around her bows to free her from the rocks. This was tricky work enough, I assure you. But it was done—by an inexperienced man, at that; the vivid prospect of rich salvage steeled us to take risks that otherwise we should have hesitated to run. And one morning, just when we thought ourselves beaten, the drag of the towing *Enclave* fetched the *Mercutio* out of her rocky haven much as a cork is pulled from a bottle. She was afloat!

We cheered ourselves hoarse. Then—the carefully constructed cofferdam burst like thunder crashing; water poured into the floating ship—and she sank like a stone! We got the hawser cut only in the nick of time; otherwise we'd have been dragged down with her.

The squinting Cretan chief, standing beside me when this happened, let out a flow of derisive, exultant jargon.

At the swipe I landed on his jaw, he went overboard like a shot rabbit, and I ran the *Enclave's* engines to full ahead. We went out of Suda Bay like a rocket—ignominious failures!

The Dancing Bear

Amateur hoboes meet lively company in a box-car.

By C. J. McNAUGHTAN

MY brother and I crept into the inky blackness of the freight-yards to start our great adventure. The gleaming red and green lights, the glare of the engines' headlights, and the sudden blast of gruff whistles made our hearts race and our blood pound. For this was in 1910, and I can see now that we were typical "small town" boys.

Some years before, an older brother had migrated from Michigan to a mining-camp at McGill, Nevada. Now he had written us offering us work at the (to us) fabulous wage of three dollars a day, and had sent us the fare to come West, but we decided to "beat" our way. Now we were seeking transportation to Omaha.

With advice from a kindly "car knock-er," we located a freight train, found a car with the side door half open, crawled in, and shutting the door, sat down at one end of the car. We waited breathlessly for the train to get under way. Suddenly we heard the door slide open again, and we heard a voice: "Come on, Tuscani, geta up, please!" There came a sound such as might have been made by a very fat man clambering into the car; then the noise of a lighter chap leaping up in an agile manner.

They came toward us in the pitch dark, and I was about to greet them, when I felt a hairy form brush me, and a huge hairy paw touch my face. I wanted to yell, but only emitted a faint squeak.

My brother heard me, however, and said: "What's the matter, Jack?" Before he could answer, another voice spoke up: "Ah, some more gooda friends. Don' be scare. Tuscani, he's a gooda bear. No hurt nobody. Justa play."

I didn't feel too sure about that. But the train had started, and we couldn't leave. So we learned that we were traveling companions with an Italian and his dancing bear, and the inevitable hand-organ. This was their way of avoiding expense in their trek from town to town.

And what a playful fellow was this Tuscani! Angelino said: "He kissa the keeds, they giva the mon'!" And indeed he wanted to kiss, hug, do a little dance, and by way of rest pick one of us to sit

upon. But finally he and his master retired to the other end of the car, and Harold and I relaxed and laughed.

Now, it so happens that in those days brakemen, or "shacks" as they were generally termed, made quite a harvest by collecting fifty cents or a dollar tribute from the knights of the road for riding over their division. And it wasn't long before one slid open the small door that was high up at the end of the car.

He thrust his lantern in first, and then his head and shoulders. He was at the end of the car where Angelino and Tuscani reposed.

At that psychological moment Tuscani, rudely disturbed, reared his great bulk up, put his face close to the brakeman's and gave a displeased, "Whoosh!"

I can't tell you the cuss-words that the brakeman wheezed forth, but his eyes bulged; his cap dropped off; the lantern fell to the floor; and had he not clutched desperately for the door casing, I believe he would have fallen beneath the wheels.

There was dead silence for a few moments; then came a voice from the outside: "What the blazes you got in there?"

"A bear," I said. "A dancing bear."

His face red with anger, the brakeman peeked cautiously in. Tuscani, thinking he had an audience, executed a few steps, which looked like a cross between dancing and the weaving style of Dempsey.

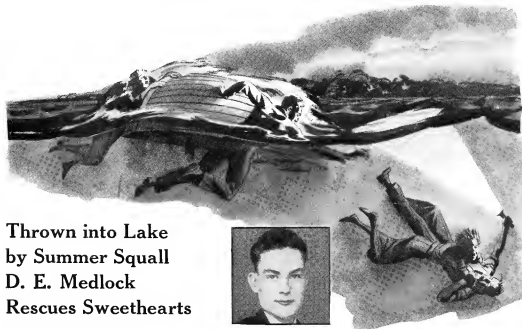
But thank heaven, that "shack" turned out to be a good sport. He looked for a moment, then gave a raucous laugh and said: "Keep that lantern a minute!"

I THINK he must have had a lot of fun telling the rest of the train-crew that they were entertaining a bear for a guest, for they all wore broad grins as they swung down into the car.

Angelino, aided by the light now from three lanterns, made Tuscani go through his bag of tricks, and he didn't lack for applause—especially when at the close, he insisted upon kissing the conductor.

There was a whistle for the first stop. The train-crew left. We also lost Angelino and Tuscani at this stop, but they had gained us a free trip to Omaha.

"DOWN THEY WENT... IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS"



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